Out of the Valley of Qadisha

Modern Syro-Maronite Identity and its Impact on Relations with the Arab Islamic World

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Abstract:

The Maronite Church is an Eastern Church within the Catholic communion, taking the name of its most revered saint, a hermit of the fourth century known as Maron. Throughout its history, it has developed from a small community of Syrian refugee into an internationally present hierarchical Church numbering in the millions. Spread across the world, it remains deeply tied to its history and homeland in Lebanon where the Patriarch continues to reside. This continuity, through an ever-changing environment, has affected the identity building of the Maronite community. The recent rise of the Islamic State and the brutality it brought about in the Middle East has once again pushed this Church of refugees to reconsider its relation to its Arab and Islamic neighbors. The study analyzes the historical and modern conditions shaping the identity of the Maronite Church. Basing itself on the emerging pattern, it continues to form an outline of what the future relations between both communities will develop into, as well as how they will impact the political scenery in the Arab world.

Introduction:

Following the rise of the Islamic State in the Middle East, multiple ethno-religious groups were targeted for persecution, forced displacement and even genocide. This widespread aggression has reignited or encouraged identity-based questions among some of these various groups, especially after having suffered massive decline in numbers (BBC 2015). Such questions were not only focused on defining or redefining the group's own identity, but they also addressed the issue of one's relation to other surrounding ethno-religious groups (Lalik 214).

Among the various minority identities within the Middle East lies the Maronite community. Being mostly situated in Lebanon, Middle-Eastern Maronites found themselves at the heart of the ISIS phenomenon. With the Lebanese Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian war, as well as the Nusra Front's attacks both on the borders of and within Lebanon, the Maronites were once again brought face to face with the existential threats that had been inflicted upon them time and time again throughout their history (Nordland).

How does this community define itself in Lebanon, and in what ways does this modern act of identity building affect its relations to the Arab-Islamic world? In being openly threatened

with subjugation by a Muslim Caliphate by a neighboring and powerful group, the Maronites were pushed further into defining their identity amidst a sea of states that self-define as Arab-Islamic. By underlining the existential prospects of an entire ethno-religious group, this analysis will also shed light on a segment of Middle Eastern socio-political relations in the near future. What fuels Maronite nationalism and shapes identity building may be used to understand other nationalistic efforts around the Arab world. Additionally, studying the Maronite case will offer grounds for informed predictions regarding the national unity or disintegration of Arab states in the upcoming decades.

The study starts by addressing the historical context of the rise of the Maronite community. It subsequently contextualizes these early years within the religious and political atmosphere of the time in order to help clarify the relation of the community to those around it. This analysis is then built upon with another one concentrating on the modern relations of the Church as made clear in its current efforts of identity building and intercommunal relations. These points will be beneficial in finally drawing an informed prediction on Syro-Maronite and Arab-Islamic relations in the near future.

I-Overview of the Literature:

The literary sources relied on fall into two main categories. The first is an assembly of historical references that help build a broad chronological idea of the Maronite existence from its onset and into the current century.[1] These resources are numerous and easily accessible given the multitude of historical studies carried out on the given Church. The second category includes more recent reports on the political, cultural and social state and involvement of the Church in Lebanon and around the world.

[1]Refer to Annex 1.

It had been preferable to rely on academic papers that study the topic addressed. However, such studies are rare and typically focus on the theological aspect of the Maronite faith. Additionally, the political situation of the Middle East continues to be volatile and ever changing, rendering previous analyses often irrelevant. As such, academic and scientific studies used mostly focus on the history of the Church and modern archaeological discoveries made regarding this topic. Finally, rather than present a literature review that focuses on a historical chronology of the Maronite Church, this timeline will be organically inserted into the analysis given the role of each major event in the shaping of the modern nationalism of the community.

Another concern to be raised regarding the literature is the lack of neutrality in the approach of many authors addressing the matter of Maronite nationalism. Rather than present it as a case of minority rights for self-determination, it is often analyzed as one of racism and a misplaced sense of national and even ethnic superiority. This will be clearly encountered in Hagopian's comparative analysis of Maronite nationalism and Zionism, one that will be thoroughly shown to be inaccurate and lacking in neutrality.

As such, what an overview of the literature shows is a still young and unfulfilled research interest in the situation of non-Arabs in a largely Arab Middle East. It adds an additional level of understanding to the importance of such a study. It also demonstrates the necessity to further invest in the study of these minorities in the region. With the cyclical rise of brutal movements like the Islamic State over the centuries, such minorities are not just overlooked but also in danger of disappearing. As such, these studies will allow for the preservation of the diversity of the region. Additionally, by spreading awareness of their efforts of identity building and self-determination, the development and adoption of egalitarian policies will be more openly and adamantly encouraged of governments under whose rule these minorities live.

II-Methodology:

Similarly to the literature, the study itself is dualistic in nature. On one hand it is a qualitative and critical analysis of major historical events in the existence of the Church. These events are chosen because of their symbolic significance in the national memory of the Maronites. Additionally, they are politicized by identity builders and as such become significant to the interest of the study. The key method of analysis occurs through the examination of the community's remembrance of its past. The role it plays in the understanding of a national identity lies in the distinction between factual history and collective memory.

In coining the term, Maurice Halbwachs bases collective memory within social frames, meaning the "frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Assmann). In other terms, it is the shared memory that a community of individuals builds by relying on several means of recollection. One important method of memory formation is the desire for an identity that separates one from the other. The desire to be different from most of the Middle East is largely encouraged in the Maronite community by the rise of the Islamic State. As such, Maronite nationalism strives for a "nation by an act of the will" (Rash). It is conscious and intended building of a new and distinct identity. Given the definition of collective memory, it is to be expected that the study of Maronite national identity relies not only on historical events but also the perception and remembrance of such events. Diana Allan's research on the variations in Palestinian inter-generational memory is used to develop an understanding of how historical memory changes over the years within the same community. Particularly, it sheds a light on the development of memory by those who had not experienced the events they remember (270).

Approaches such as interviews and surveys were not used for several reasons. Firstly, the position of members of the Maronite community may differ among regions in Lebanon based on their political adherence. Secondly, such a skew in position does not accurately reflect identity-building efforts of the leadership. The newness of these efforts does not permit sufficient time for their efficiency to be noticeable in the general population. Lastly, the impact of the religious authority and lay leadership of the Maronite community is indicative of the direction in which this identity is being led for reasons that are later discussed regarding the authority of the Patriarch.

In addition to historical analysis, an additional political analysis of current events is also heavily relied on. Several theories in the fields of political science and conflict resolution are incorporated in this study. Subjects such as variations in national memory and the conscious formation of desired identity are discussed. These are added to a study of various characteristics that shape nationalism such as religion, language, foundation myths and shared purpose. However, the greatest use of political theory lies in the final analysis of intercommunal relations with the Arab-Islamic world. The work of renowned experts on nationalism such as Wimmer and Renan is incorporated into the analysis in order to gain further clarity on the topic. Given its relevance to the topic, the approaches of transitional justice and modern conflict resolution methods are both addressed as means of rapprochement between Syro-Maronites and Arab-Islamic communities. As such, the methodology of this study is strongly built on qualitative historical and modern political analysis that is deeply rooted in various theories on nationalism and conflict resolution.

Defining Before Deconstructing:

In order to accurately analyze such complex interactions, key terms will be first defined to help clarify what specific actors or the factors that shape their relations mean.

Maronite:

In 2005, the Maronite Diocese of Australia published an article in its periodical, *Marounia*, addressing the relation of the Maronite diaspora to its country of origin: Lebanon. Two Maronite priests, Father Peter Joseph and Father Emmanuel Sakr, stated the following: "The true Maronite strives diligently for spiritual and cultural authenticity and intellectual openness. He has great respect for the country where he lives, for freedom and the dignity of life… However, there is one other important aspect to acknowledge. It is the aspect of Middle Eastern culture, specifically Lebanese culture, as an element that has shaped Australian [and diaspora] Maronite consciousness up to the present" (Tabar).

The article was a reflection of the Maronite Church's modern attempt to redefine its own role within a new reality in which it was no longer a local Church of persecuted refugees but of global and well-established influence. What is the role of that Church[2] in building Maronite identity, and what position does it take within that identity? In order to address these questions, it is imperative to look at the origins of the Maronite nation before defining it in its current present form.

[2] For the purpose of brevity and clarity, the term "Church" will from hereon refer to the Maronite Catholic Church per the definition provided in the text. Whenever a distinction is to be made, a defining adjective will be added to clarify which Church is being discussed.

Chapter One: Origins and Development of the Maronites

I-Birth of the Maronite Church:

Maron Before Maronites:

In the late fourth and early fifth centuries, a man named Maron separated himself from society and sought to live a life of prayer, penance and solitude on a mountain in Syria (Cyrrhus 117). After converting a pagan temple into a church, he then began through his way of life to attract many followers looking to learn from him as disciples. In fact, the entire pagan community around him had experienced conversions to Catholicism, thus igniting the mass spread of that faith within Syria and subsequently Lebanon (Eparchy of Saint Maron).

This religious distinction is the first indication of the community's coming long trajectory of spiritual uniqueness. The merit of Maron set him aside as a religious leader and example to be emulated. His community very soon started to attract persecution from powerful religious and political enemies. After Maron's death, his followers the Maronites moved to the mountains of Lebanon due to that persecution by various actors. One of the most important regions of their subsequent settlement was the Qadisha gorge in the north, a place that remains a significant spiritual location for Maronites, even up to this day (Eparchy of Saint Maron).

Uniqueness and Universality:

The person of Maron is central to the Church that bears his name, and his spirituality and lifestyle have strongly shaped the Maronite tradition within Catholicism. During his lifetime, his method of intense asceticism won him the admiration and praise of significant contemporary religious figures within the Byzantine Empire. John Chrysostom, the revered and famed bishop of Constantinople (Naaman 57), wrote down his praises of Maron. Theodoret, bishop of Cyr, also wrote extensively about him in his historical work (Naaman 65).

Maron's life helped promote the practice of Christian monasticism through Hypethritism: living in the open air and subject to the natural elements. It was a new form of monastic practice that also distinguished him yet again from the rest of the Christian community. His dedicated practice of penance, sacrifice and obedient faithfulness to the authorities of the Catholic Church would then become emblematic of the larger Maronite Church. Attracting many to his way of life and guidance, Maron became within a short period the spiritual teacher of the Christians of Cyr in modern-day Syria. His disciples emulated him by becoming missionaries and promoters of their faith and strengthening the distinct identity of the community already deeply rooted in the example of the monk. Men like Jacob and Limnaius, as well as women like Domnina, followed in the footsteps of Maron by leading similar lives of poverty, prayer, solitude and continuous silence. It is such disciples who will then propagate Maron's way of life to communities within Syria and Lebanon, setting the foundations to what will grow to be known as the Maronite Church (Naaman 59). The Church, similarly to other self-ruling communities within the Catholic communion,[3] is directed by a head bishop elected by other bishops as Patriarch. All the bishops in turn ordain priests, oversee religious and lay communities and the affairs of all the members of the Maronite Church. These members, the Maronites,[4] are individuals who are received into the Church through its various forms such as Baptism, Confirmation or Canonical Transfer. They adhere to its teachings and the authority of its bishops and patriarch (The Maronite Patriarchate).

[3] The capitalized term "Church" refers to the whole structure of self-ruling organization of faith consisting of the bishops, priests and other laity. A lower case "church" refers to the building.
[4] Given the complexity of defining who is to be considered a Maronite and its lack of effect in the development of this study, the more precise details of this definition will not be addressed here.

As such, the Maronite community and spirituality have always continued to reflect the ascetical and monastic example of its founder. In fact, even the Patriarchs had at multiple intervals throughout history resided in the caves of hermits. The laity, too, had lived monastic-influenced lives in the past that embraced a schedule of intense prayer and work (Bilaniuk 85). This distinction in spirituality and focus on monasticism as lived by Maron has enabled the Church to become an independent religious community within the broader Catholic Church. It continues to be a self-ruling member of an ecclesial communion under the headship of the Catholic Pope in Rome. In that sense, even within the Catholic Church itself, Maronites have maintained a distinct spiritual identity outlined by a litany of unique traditions and characteristics (Pope Paul VI).

Today, the community that had first gathered around a lone monk in Syria in the late fourth century has grown to become the Maronite Catholic Church numbering around 3.36 million members spread worldwide (Catholics and Cultures). The unique origins of this community have caused it to suffer continuous persecutions from diverse aggressors. However, it is these same persecutions that have allowed it to remain sheltered and safeguarded from assimilation within other more affluent communities surrounding it throughout history. Through this dual and somewhat contradictory relationship to persecution, the Maronite Church was both repetitively threatened throughout the years of its existence and set aside as a distinct community that survived the double enemies of aggressors and assimilations.

Between Church and State:

A few decades after the death of Maron, the Eastern Roman Emperor Marcianus founded the Monastery of *Beit Maroun* (House of Maron) in 452 in Northern Syria to defend the Catholic teachings proclaimed the previous year in the Council of Chalcedon. This defense of their

spiritual identity would lead to one of the earliest mass massacres to be committed against the community. It is still commemorated to this day as the massacre of the 350 monks in the early sixth century by another religious group called the Jacobites. Its occurrence is preserved in the historical record through the correspondence between various religious leaders of the province of Syria and Pope Hormisdas in Rome. In their letter, they decry the attacks carried out against their monasteries that killed hundreds and wounded as many (Horn). This experience was yet another early hint at what was to continue in the long history of the Maronite Church. Some of those other torments would come at the hands of the Byzantines. However, despite the coming deterioration of relations with that empire, the first Patriarch of the Maronite Church would come from that same Byzantine-built *Beit Maroun* monastery. He will be known as monk *Youhanna Maroun* (John Maron) (Gemayel 9).

It was during the reign of this John Maron as Bishop and subsequently Patriarch that the Maronite people began to adopt more defined characteristics of a nation. In moving the Maronite Patriarchate from Antioch to Mount Lebanon, John Maron also strengthened fortresses and militias to defend his community in Lebanon from Muslim and Byzantine incursions and assaults. It was finally his nephew's militia that struck a fatal blow to Emperor Justinian II's Byzantine army sent to capture the patriarch in Lebanon.

In order to support this recounting of events, some historians draw a link between the armed Maronites and the Mardaites, a militia famed for its efficiency and success in war in the Syrian lands. These Mardaites had initially been used by the Byzantine Emperors as a wall of defense against the onslaught of Persian and Arab armies. Various political reasons caused them to find themselves fighting the Byzantine Empire they had first served (Salibi 289). The incursions by Emperor Justinian II into Lebanon come as the second major persecution of the

Maronite community to be raised in this study. With this are joined the Mamluk persecutions that will be further discussed in detail later on.

While scholarly debates remain ongoing regarding various aspects of Maronite history (Hagopian 108), all the Church's resources studied draw the same historical image. The official websites of the Patriarchate, several Eparchies and the Maronite Research Institute agree. Saint Maron is the hermit who first attracted followers. Patriarch John Maron later united these followers into a community with a homeland in Lebanon and defended by its own militia (The Maronite Patriarchate).

II-Nation and Memory:

Desired Identities and Collective Memory:

It is true that the historical background of the modern Maronite nation remains subject to debate. The precise recalling of the early years of the Maronites is crucial in determining the reasons the community developed as it did. However, the accuracy of this process becomes less significant when analyzing the formation of their modern identity. In other terms, the historical precision of their collective memory is not as significant to this study as the content of that memory itself, and the reasons behind it, are. Collective memory incorporates a community's will in building a national identity. As such, the form in which that community chooses to remember its past is a significant indicator of its process of identity building. In her work, Julie Peteet further develops how national identity can be formed without a strong and accurate grounding in the real historical past. National history itself may be consciously formed and reshaped based on various political and social goals, among others (Peteet). The past is part of a desired identity being formed, and the choice of Maronite identity builders is alone of interest to the study. As such, whether or not certain events did occur in truth is not important to

investigate. What relates to the study of modern Maronite identity is how the community views its past, one that is real or not. The image built then indicates what the community itself desires to appropriate as its past. In other words, the shaping of national memory is an active effort rather than a passive one. One can even state that the desired national identity shapes the national memory as much the latter does the former. It is a symbiotic relationship in which both are created by each other. In the end, collective memory will be more significant for the study than the historicity of events.

Building a Narrative:

Once such a desired identity begins to exist in the minds of community leaders and identity shapers, then the process of narrative formation can subsequently take form. A similar modern process was witnessed in the methods applied by the Islamic State to build an account justifying its existence as a religious and political organization. This approach focused on presenting the Muslim world as being a victim of Western oppression and aggression. In doing so, the Islamic State manages to draw a separating line between the supposedly victimized Muslims and the non-Muslim aggressors (Heck 247). The truth or lack thereof of such narratives does not influence the nationalist sentiment, as long as the narrative can be corroborated somehow.

To be precise, the process of identity building can as such be divided into three phases. First, the determination of the desired identity occurs among community leaders and shapers. Secondly, a narrative is constructed to give credence to this identity. It may rely on the selective remembrance of particular historical occurrences in the history of the community, as well as the reinterpretation of others. Finally, a national identity can be shaped based on the strengthening and proliferation of this version of memory among the members of the nation.

Similarly to the Islamic State as a political and religious organization, Maronites also create a narrative of their history that helps promote their version of founding myths and collective memory. As such, as the study continues to develop a full image of the history of Maronites, the focus is not given to factual history but to that which has been shaped and built. The history that the Maronites appropriate as being theirs is a description of their own self-perception. It evolves in the end to become the foundation myth, and such myths maintain their influence in shaping a national identity with or without historical authenticity. As such, the historical existence of John Maron can be true or not. What matters is that for the time being, Maronites continue to believe that he is the first patriarch of their Church and that he moved the patriarchate to Lebanon, a land which he defended and built up. Along with Maron the monk, John Maron is the character that justifies how the Maronite people came to exist as a united community within one homeland. He personifies the transformation of various dispersed individuals and families in Syria into a united people within organized communities having a sense of a shared future. The vagueness of history is beneficial to the process of nation building in this case. As Ernest Renan states: “the act of forgetting… is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation.” All that is remembered is what is desired as a national memory.

Who Are the Maronites?

With this distinction drawn between historical narrative and historicity, it is now possible to begin detailing what the modern Maronite nation is. However, a nation cannot be defined without contestation, because a nation is self-defining. The members alone can determine whether or not they share an identity (Renan). This shows that there is no indicator of how much agreement within a group can define factors determining belonging. Who has the right to define the boundaries of a nation? If those who fall outside such boundaries still self-identify as

belonging to that nation, are they to be disqualified or considered as equal contenders and justified in their call to broaden the national boundaries? After asking what a nation is, Renan argues that identifiers such as religion, language and natural frontiers do not suffice to define one. He continues to answer his own question with a vague proclamation, stating: “a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle”. He then develops his assertion by stating that two things make up such a spiritual principle. One is a shared past and memory, and the other is a present desire to “perpetuate the value of the heritage” (Renan). As such, he begins to hint at the approach being used to develop a modern Maronite national identity.

Who is developing such an identity by presenting themselves as a leader of the community? One actor is the most visible and powerful entity responsible for the birth, growth, leadership, management and inter-communal relations of the Maronite nation: the Maronite Catholic Church. A nation having been born with, as well as bearing the name of, a Catholic monk cannot be separated from the Church to be fully understood in its identity. In fact, this is made apparent in the reality of the political and spiritual power and leadership of the Maronite Patriarchs. Starting with Patriarch John Maron, as head of the Church he has maintained varying degrees of social and political power with his community, as well as regarding other communities or political entities to be discussed in subsequent sections. As Renan mentioned, what distinguished the Maronites from others was the spiritual principle around which it was founded. It was embodied through the unified leadership of the Maronite Church and the structure it built that permitted for the development of the community into a separate nation. For these reasons, membership in the Maronite Church will be taken as the identifier of the generic Maronite nation being discussed in this study.

Another reason lies in the strong boundaries of that Church. It has a defined leadership with the authority to delineate who is to be considered a Maronite (Catholic Church 2020). As such, those who are part of the Church per its conditions for a member in good standing, while additionally self-defining themselves as a Maronite as discussed here, are the individuals that make up the Maronite Nation.

The definition remains sweeping, since as argued above, a nation cannot be strictly defined. However, the broadness of this demarcation is inconsequential to the results of the study that focuses mainly on national leaders and influencers such as religious hierarchy and individuals with a vast social impact.

Chapter Two: The Modern Maronite National Identity

I-Drawing the Borders of a Transnational Institution:

Broadening Horizons:

During the second session of the 2004 synod convened by the Maronite Church to discuss its modern vision, its place in a continually globalized world was addressed in terms of the Maronite diaspora. "At the existential level, the Maronite Church is not any more a particular Church confined to a specific place on earth. Along with the dispersion of its followers… [it] has been transformed into a global Church despite the fact that its cultural legacy is oriental and Syriac" (Tabar). The synod references the global presence of the Maronite Church and hints at a significant change in its geographical presence, in itself a main instigator of new pursuits of identity. Indeed, being spread around multiple countries in the Americas, Europe and Africa, the Church is no longer restricted to the Levant region (Central Committee of the General Secretariat of the Maronite Church).

Having entered its transnational phase, the Maronite Church is now at a crossroads of identity building. It is important to distinguish between the transnational presence of the Church as opposed to its self-presentation as a unified transnational entity. The first situation is a result and a reflection of the global emigration of Maronites across the world, as mentioned above. The Church is transnational, meaning that it is no longer delineated by the boundaries of one state or region of the world. However, this reality imposed by globalization and emigration is also willfully adopted by Church leadership as a new approach to the responsibilities and reaches of the Maronite Church. In fact, after his participation in the synod led by the late Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, Father Geoffrey Abdallah, the Dean of the Maronite Cathedral of Sydney, stated:

> "The topics of 'identity' and the 'expansion' were much discussed during the Synod – particularly the role of Lebanon and our relationship to Lebanon. However, we cannot avoid the reality that the majority of Maronites now live outside of Lebanon and are unlikely to return permanently to Lebanon. This does not mean that the Maronites living outside of Lebanon wish to form nationalistic Churches such as the Maronite Church of Australia or the Maronite Church of America etc., independent from Lebanon. Quite the opposite, we are requesting that the Maronite Church in Lebanon itself move from being a nationalistic Church into a universal [read transnational] Maronite Church, embracing all Maronites, regardless of their ethnicity or culture for we are now, to use the opening words of Bishop Abikaram's intervention in the Synod [Abikaram has been the third Bishop of the Maronites in Australia since January 2002], 'Maronites of the world.' This is something positive and encouraging. Otherwise, the Maronite Church will become irrelevant to future generations born outside of Lebanon (Marounia)" (Tabar).

Father Abdallah is reflecting on the expansion of the boundaries of a nation into the universal stage.

Denationalization and Renationalization:

However, in order to preserve a unified national self-awareness among its members, the Church has pursued a method of new identity building by consciously creating shared focal points of identity for its diverse and international sub-groups. This includes the balancing of what Götz brands as "denationalization" and "renationalization". In addressing modern German

approaches to national identity, the author separated both processes as being contradictory. She presented denationalization as the adoption of new representations into the existing repertoire of national symbolism. The result is the breaking down of the old version of the national identity. On the other hand, renationalization is the affirmation of pre-existing symbols of that identity, a process whose results are the strengthening of national identity (Götz 811).

Globalocalism:

The Maronite Church, especially through the synod documents, had consciously adopted both measures as a means of defining its new identity, thus broadening and strengthening its borders at the same time. By rooting the Church in its historical homeland of Lebanon, its figures of inception such as Patriarch John Maron, as well as its shared experience of birth and persecution, the Maronite socio-religious leadership has led the Church and the nation founded around it into an era of "globalocal" existence (Leichtman). This refers to the denationalization adopted during the synod in which the Church had formally engaged the universality of its members through opening up to embrace Maronites across the world. In that sense, it had detached itself from being a Church solely engaged with the Lebanese or Middle Eastern Maronites.

However, in order to remain relevant for the new generations of Maronites who have no personal connection with Lebanon, the Church has had to expand its repertoire of symbols by adopting new ones relevant to an international population that is not bound by specific state frontiers. Given the expansion of the Maronites across cultures, in addition to the growing diversity of their cultural backgrounds, it was important for the Church to renationalize itself as a unified group with shared symbols. This process occurs through the building of new connections between the diaspora and the historical homeland of Lebanon. The free trips to Lebanon offered

by the Maronite Academy to diaspora Maronites are one example of such efforts of renationalization. Their purpose is to incentivize young Maronites to experience Lebanon as a national homeland by covering all travel expenses. These trips create knowledge of Lebanon to those who otherwise would not experience it (The Maronite Foundation in the World).

Despite such organized measures of identity building across borders and cultures, the Maronite Church still faces a significant hurdle in maintaining the uniformity of what would have been presented as a Maronite culture. The experience of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon presents a case study of multi-generational relation to a homeland. Based on Diana Allan's study of the Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon, it is conclusive that even within the same delineated geographical locations, multiple generations develop varying mental images of their homelands based on their experience (Allan 270). Their homeland of Palestine is more of an image or a symbol of unified belonging and longing, rather than the concrete state or region that the former generations had lived in and seek to return to. In a similar manner, the newer generations of Maronites lack a personal encounter with the Lebanese homeland.

Drawing on the comparison with Palestinian refugees, it is arguable that despite the Church's efforts to renationalize the Maronite nation through new unifying symbols, different generations, cultures, or groups among the Maronite international community receive this imagery in diverse manners. For this reason, one cannot speak of one homogeneous Maronite experience. In other words, the Maronite Church's efforts to rebrand itself as a universal community with strong links to its historical homeland of Lebanon are successful as far as one is to consider the idea of that Lebanese homeland as a broad range of experiences rather than a homogeneous relationship among all Maronites. Building on Paul Tabar's description of this phase of diasporisation and transnationalisation of the Church, this analysis expands the

definition to include the diversification of the Maronite identity through the varying experiences of the diaspora Maronites (Tabar).

II-The Holy Union of Church and State:

Maronite: Between Soul and Body:

Indeed, the expansion of the national borders of the Maronite nation, as rebranded by the Church, is not to be dissociated from the enforcement of the notion of a historical homeland presented through the form of the modern Lebanese state. Just as the Maronite nation cannot be separated from the religious identity of the Church, so is the Lebanese state strongly wedded to the myth of John Maron as its founder, rendering it a proto-state founded by and for Maronites. In fact, the leadership of John Maron, followed by his heirs on the Patriarchal chair, is presented as having formed the early years of the Maronite people in Lebanon. These patriarchs were the core of the Maronite nation, and lead the people not just spiritually but also politically. The foundation myth of John Maron has him organizing the military resistance of the Maronites in their Lebanese bastion. Several other Patriarchs were persecuted as political leaders of the community, thus enforcing the concept of a Martyr Church and a persecuted nation. One can recall the burning of Patriarch Gabriel el-Hjouli by the Mamluks (Jabre 5). The modern political leadership of the Maronite Patriarch will be further addressed in later sections.

However, the importance of their historical leadership lies in its use by various identity-based groups, thinkers and leaders of the community as a basis for the recognition of the Maronite community as central to the past formation and future of Lebanon. It is a tool presented for the redefining of Lebanon as a Maronite state welcoming non-Maronites, rather than a state in which Maronites have become gradually less and less politically significant (United States Department of State). The purpose of this approach is to strengthen their waning political

influence, a decline that started with the Taif Accords and continues today with the rise of strong non-Christian political parties like Hezbollah (Central Intelligence Agency). As such, the retelling of the foundation myth and early political years of the Maronites becomes a nation-building tool by presenting the community as central to the origin of the Lebanese state. While attempting to uphold the political importance of the Maronites, such an approach also presents Lebanon as the first and continuing official state homeland of the community around the world, thus offering it a point of unity and belonging amidst its growing diversity.

The innovation of the modern Maronite identity, starting with the presentation of a political state as a common homeland, continues on to the creation of an ideal Maronite figure. Recent spiritual and political speech has seen the introduction of the image of the hardworking, prayerful, strong and independent Maronite villager figure. Liturgical sermons (Gharios), social and political discourses have all become infused with the concept of the refined Maronite presented as an ideal to be strived for. It is a glorified image of the historical members of the community put forth as the goal of the modern members. The example of the Maronite villager comes after the foundation of the homeland state. It seeks to encourage what the Maronite Church had already planted: the renationalization of the Maronite community as one united by common ideals and goals, deeply rooted in a shared historical land and being separate from neighboring communities. Indeed, that theme draws a distinction between the Maronites and the rest of the communities in Lebanon. The villager is now a Maronite villager, and likewise the Maronite is now one who remembers his love for the land of his ancestors the villagers who defended and planted the homeland. It is through these modern methods that the Maronite identity continues to be separated from other existing Arab and Islamic ones within Lebanon and

the Middle East, building on the concept of a common historical state as homeland and a shared ideal characteristics of the members (Emmanuel).

III-The Valley of (Maronite) Saints:

If Lebanon is the home of the Maronite nation, then the Wadi Qadisha is its beating heart. Syriac for “holy valley”, Wadi Qadisha holds historical and modern spiritual, political, social and cultural value for the Maronite Church and nation. Labeled a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO, the valley holds some of the earliest Christian monastic settlements in the world, including Ethiopian, Greek and Syriac-Maronite. The value of the valley does not stem from the recognition of an international entity such as the UNESCO. However, such a recognition offers non-Maronite support and attention to a valley already deeply rooted in the Maronite nation’s history. It is also a region surrounded by villages and towns largely inhabited by Maronites, such as Becharré, known as a bastion of the Maronite community even today (UNESCO). Due to the historical presence of Maronites within and around the valley, several monasteries both running and extinct still exist. Believed to be the oldest constantly running Maronite monastery in the world, Saint Anthony Qozhaya is thought to have been founded in the early fourth century by hermits seeking a life of prayer. The identity and specific religious affiliation of these hermits remains unknown, but in time the monastery and adjoining hermitages came under the authority and management of the Maronite Church. Though destroyed in the 1000s, it was quickly rebuilt and occupied (The Monastery of Saint Anthony). Another main monastery in the valley is that of Qannoubine, or Our Lady of Qannoubine. Possibly built by Emperor Theodosius himself in 375, it was recently renovated and inhabited by two Maronite nuns. The importance of that monastery is manifold.

To begin with, similarly to Saint Anthony's monastery, it became at one point in history the seat of the Maronite patriarch and his spiritual and political leadership (Charaf 3). This emphasizes the national significance of the Qadisha Valley to Maronites across the world. Most notable among these patriarchs is Mar Estephan el-Douaihy who is considered saintly by the members of his community. He wrote his famed historical works *Tarikh al-Azminah* and *Tarikh al-Ta'ifa al-Marouniyya* in which he discusses the history of the Maronites. He expresses the nature of the Maronite presence in Lebanon in his own person. He built relations with several Christian and Muslim communities; he also ended up persecuted multiple times and was forced to escape away from his seat. However, he died in the valley of those who, like him, are considered saints, passing away in Qadisha in 1704 (Chesworth and Thomas 67). Patriarch Douaihy was recently declared a "Venerable" by the Catholic Church (Patriarch Estephan Douaihy Foundation), a term bestowed upon those who are seen to have displayed heroic living of Catholic virtues (USCCB). This title of honor now brings to the forefront of the nation's identity a renewed historical pride and unity, through which the praise of one man is translated and expanded into the praise of a nation. In Qadisha, one sees the intertwining of historical and modern national identities among the Maronites. This occurs when the original symbols of the nation are infused again with importance and used to encourage modern national sentiment.

The rebirth of Qannoubine monastery is also a geographical and architectural link between the early and modern existence of the Maronite Church. It is the result of the efforts of the Church's leadership in reestablishing its influence and spread within Lebanon as an institution central to the state's identity due to its historical and continuous presence within the land. Moreover, Qadisha itself may be understood as a representation of the larger Lebanese state in the Maronite mindset: it is a land with clear borders in which the community has flourished

and grown throughout the centuries. To understand the socio-cultural revival of the Maronite Church as seen in Qadisha is to understand its work on the state level. It is the use of historic symbols for the renationalization and enforcement of a modern unifying identity.

IV-Redefining Society: Lay Leaders of Maronite Nationalism:

Laying the Foundations of the Maronite World:

While the Church remains the central actor in the building of modern Maronite identity, secular groups have closely upheld the process as well. In fact, while these groups are created and aim to develop and propagate such an identity, their own new existence is in itself an indication of the rise of nationalism within the community. One of the most prominent of these recent groups is *Tur Levnon* (Syriac for "Mount Lebanon"), headed by architect Amine Jules Iskandar. Originally founded in 1999, the association later on merged with multiple other groups to take its current form in 2017. Its official page presents its goals as encouraging the teaching of the history of Lebanon beyond what is currently taught at schools. This refers to the incorporation of the history of the Maronites and Lebanese Christianity into national remembrance and educational textbooks. It is a section that has so far been supplemented by Ottoman and French Mandate narratives (Tur Levnon). In other words, the aim is to reconnect the Lebanese with the knowledge of their Maronite and Syriac origins, including their role in the founding of the modern state of Lebanon.

This goal is coupled with the reinsertion of the use of the Syriac language in the main Maronite liturgy known as the Qurbono (Mass following the Syriac rite of the Catholic Church), working closely with the Church to insert Syriac classes in Church-run schools, as well as funding and promoting language classes in the wider society (Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church 2020). The purpose of this approach is to use "Syriac to reunite Maronites of

Lebanon with the Diaspora, but also to reunite all Christian branches in a common culture and on an ecumenical level." In other words, this mission is comparable to that of the Church itself: the rediscovery of the history of the Maronites and the symbols having the potential to unite them and offering them as a focal point for the Maronites in Lebanon and the diaspora. What is notable is that while these groups and associations work closely with the Church (given that Tur Levnon's co-founder is a Maronite priest), they remain largely lay organizations run by non-ecclesial members (Tur Levnon).

Fueling the Fire:

Even though such associations have been in existence for decades, their renewed activism has been strongly encouraged by the repetitive attacks against Christians in the Middle East. For instance, one can draw a link between the Maronites of Lebanon and the Syriacs of Iraq. Both communities exist as minority Christian groups within larger Islamic countries or regions (BBC 2011). Known for the intense religious persecution they have been facing for centuries, the Iraqi Syriac Christians developed a sense of renewed national identity. This was most significantly expressed through the rebirth of Babylonian culture among them. The Chaldean, Syriac Catholics, Syriac Orthodox and other similar Christian groups started adopting Babylonian names, promoting their historical mythology, publishing in the Syriac language and expanding education regarding Babylonian and Syriac cultural works such as literature and art (DeKelaita 19).

The upsurge in nationalistic views and groups comes as a reaction to a perceived threat against the community or nation. When the identity of that community is questioned or threatened, these same groups are drawn towards the self-definition of that identity. This leads to a rise in nationalistic tendencies and expressions (Hutchinson 100). The history of persecution

faced by the Maronite community and Church seems to be the main instigator of their modern nationalism. The Martyr-Church continues to face either violence or the threat of violence, most predominantly through the rise of the Islamic State phenomenon. Systemic violence, rampant against Christians and other minorities in the Middle East (Ibrahim), was coupled with the images of atrocious bloodshed carried out against Iraqis and Syrians during the ongoing conflict (Alfifi, Caverl and Kaghazgaran 2).

However, these anxieties have arisen many decades, and even centuries, before. Maronite nationalism had been strongly encouraged through the *Millet* system of the Ottoman occupation of the region. Translating to "nation", the system allowed each religious community a certain degree of self-rule (Masters 383). This naturally encouraged a sense of independence among different communities who were first and foremost loyal to their own community leaders rather than the state. It reinforced the religio-political leadership of the Maronite patriarch, a concept already strongly rooted in Maronite consciousness due to their early years of persecution and auto-rule in the mountains of Lebanon.

In addition to this system of ingrained communal separation and semi-independence, the Maronites constantly faced persecution from that same Ottoman Empire. While one can delineate marked periods throughout history encouraging their nationalism as a result of persecution, its development remains a linear growth caused by both political independence and religious segregation. To elaborate, the Maronites' continuing separation from surrounding groups in Lebanon is rooted in a constant perception of persecution.

First victimized by the Jacobites and the Byzantines, they were subsequently persecuted by the Islamic invaders of the Middle East, a persecution that continued with the rulers of the region in the thirteenth century, the Mamluks. The later infamous Massacres of the Mountain,

during which the Druze slaughtered thousands of Maronites, remain engraved in national memory. This continuation of conflict and aggression peaked yet again in the Civil War of 1975 that saw the Lebanese society divided along sectarian lines, pitting communities against each other (Minority Rights Group International). The series of persecutions enrich the sense of separation of the community from others within Lebanon. As such, both a social split and a history of injustices continue to enforce the divide between the Maronites and the rest of the communities within Lebanon and the Middle Eastern region.

In recent years, the continuing sectarian separation of the Lebanese political system, as well as the rise of the Islamic State and the global reach of its massacres and crimes, has yet again mirrored these two factors. On one hand, the division of the Presidency, the Parliamentary Speaker, and the Prime Minister's positions among the three main sects of Lebanon encourages a mentality of sectarian voting and leadership. The continuing division of power among communities enhances the sectarian understanding of politics and the ongoing fight for the power of the national group as opposed to that of the state (a government for all nations within the state) (Library of Congress 2015).

On the other hand, the Islamic State rose to reignite the fear of persecution among minorities in the Levant region, not least of all the Christians. Its main influence in strengthening Maronite nationalism is based on its promotion of the narrative that even before any political reasons, the persecution of Christians is rooted in Islam (Woods). The Islamic State's crimes against the minorities of Syria and Iraq echoed a persistent historical warning haunting the Maronites: the encounter of the community with certain versions of Islam in the Middle East has been immensely unfavorable and dangerous for its own survival. This time, the persecution was ongoing and reached global audiences. The video of the Coptic victims on the Libyan beach

reached global audiences and reminded them of the cost of being Christian in a region priding itself of its proclaimed Arab-Islamic identity (EWTN).

This brought to the forefront the question of the place of minorities in the Middle East. It was clear once again that minorities were often neither valued nor respected. The Islamic State's brutal promotion of its concept of a Caliphate paralleled what the Arab-Islamic identity had long been to the Middle Eastern minorities: a hegemonic project that had imposed the rule of Islamic Arabs on a region of many other cultures and faiths. The Islamic State was as such a brutal echo of Pan-Arabism (Farah 37). Though the first focused on a Sunni Caliphate for Muslims of all ethnic background, the latter called for a union of what were deemed to be Arabs and Arab states under the mantle of one nation, a union that has long overlooked the rights of non-Arab and non-Islamic minorities. As such, both the concepts of either an Islamic or a secular Arab state converged as a source of persecution and cultural erasure to the Maronites, strengthening yet again their search for a self-defined identity not imposed by a majority or invaders.

This is seen across the so-called Arab world in which minority groups such as the Berbers of Algeria and the Assyrians of Iraq have sought to have their rights recognized as distinct ethnic or religious minorities (Danver 23, 517). In the case of the Maronites, the self-defining tilted towards a Syriac ethnic origin that is strongly wedded to their historical presence as a non-Muslim community. In fact, the memory of Islamic invaders, rooted in the early Islamic military expansions, the Ottoman Empire, the Mamluks and now the Islamic State, contributed as well to Maronites outlining their Christian identity as being distinct from surrounding communities.

<u>Rewriting History:</u>

However, just as historical and modern grievances fueled the building of a divergent national identity, so has that ongoing identity building among Maronites encouraged them to look back to their history and reclaim the historical narrative passed down to them. Tur Levnon*'s* goals very clearly addressed this cycle through their program of teaching history to current and future generations. The focus is to rewrite the historical narrative through the community's experience. It aims to balance other versions of history with a form of national historical memory. Instead of celebrating ideologies like Pan-Arabism or Islamism, it was now held as imperative for Maronites to learn their own history. In that new history, Arabs were no longer victorious conquerors and settlers of a large region. They were now seen as foreign invaders who destroyed multiple native cultures by supplanting them with a monolithic Arab one.

Part of this new historical narrative takes into consideration the periods of persecution suffered by the Maronites. These grievances were now being recalled, remembered and, similarly to the Armenian Genocide, promoted as a central part of national history. Two particular national tragedies are now being rediscovered and publicized in Maronite communities (Iskandar 2019). The first is known as *Kafno*. Syriac for "famine", it represents the famed possibly man-made famine that ravaged Mount Lebanon from 1914 till 1918, killing half the population of the country, estimated at around 220,000 victims. As the region was under a land and naval siege by the Ottomans and French respectively, a wave of locust invasion destroyed the remaining crops of a land already facing scarcity. Though the Ottomans claimed it had been circumstantial, other contemporary and modern sources draw a more criminal cause for the tragedy by blaming it on a willed policy of famine against the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon. Sources speak of the seizing of the cereal and wheat stores of the region for the Ottoman army.

Additionally, when unable to transport them, the Ottoman chose instead to burn these grains rather than leave them for the famished local population. Many forests were cut bare, animals seized and doctors and medicine transported in service of the Ottoman army (Taoutel and Wittouck).

Maronites are pushing to have the international community recognize Kafno as genocide equivalent to the willful eradication and displacement of the Armenians by that same Empire. However, these Syriacs of Lebanon are not the only ones to call for the recognition of their persecution and genocide by the Ottomans. Those of Upper Mesopotamia also fight for the recognition of *Sayfo*, Syriac for "sword", which is the name given to the massacre of thousands of that community in the regions of modern day southeastern Turkey, most notably in Tur Abdin (Tur Levnon).

The second national tragedy is that of the Damour Massacre. Possibly up to 500 civilians were raped, mutilated and massacred in the coastal city of Damour on January 20, 1976. The perpetrators were members of various militias and states, including the Palestinian Liberation Army, the Libyan *Sa'iqa*, the Nasserist *Murabitun* and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. In other terms, it was Muslim or Arab-nationalist militiamen who perpetrated the massacre against a Maronite town during the Civil War (Hirst 111). The religious and ethno-political affiliation of the criminals is significant in affecting the national memory of Maronites, given that it encourages the tendency to build a line of division between a Syriac-Maronite community and its surrounding Muslim-Arab neighbors.

Of the many crimes committed throughout the Lebanese Civil War of the 1970s, only the massacre of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camps by Phalangist forces (largely Maronite) has been recognized as genocide so far (United Nations 38). Genocide, as defined by

the UN Resolution 230, "includes the act of killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and establishing measures intending to physically destroy part or the entirety of a group" (Semelin 317). The Sabra and Shatila massacres, as well as the Damour ones, are identical in violence, purpose, and homogeneity of the victim population. However, only one of these massacres is recognized as genocide.

> "The means in which acts of violence are defined help shape the memory of the event in the mind of future generations. For example, while the Sabra and Shatila killings of Palestinians by Israeli-allied Lebanese militiamen is commemorated and studied, there is no mention of the slaughter of Lebanese civilians by Palestinian militias in Damour-Lebanon, six years earlier (Aude). This example sheds light on two important points. The first is that Palestinians now have a date and a process of healing they could engage in, perhaps even demanding justice from international courts. However, the Lebanese victims remain in anonymity. Their death becomes both the killing of [individuals] but also of memory. The lack of international uproar and awareness of the massacres of Damour leave the victims powerless in demanding justice and support (Fisk)" (Haddad 4).

The second main idea revealed by this selective defining of events is the complete reconstruction of the narrative of the conflict and the nation's history. In granting special treatment to solely one massacre, the General Assembly of the United Nations helped build a skewed concept of Maronite relations to other communities. The term of genocide focuses the light on the losses of the Palestinian community alone. As such, the Maronite one is now

depicted as a perpetrator of genocide without an appropriate context to the events. In recalling the crimes of one group only, the weight of guilt is unjustly placed completely on that given group. This “memoricide”, the destruction or refusal to uphold the national memory of the Maronites, then leads to two ends (Pappe 231). It allows the community itself to forget its own past and origins, as has happened so far with its language and general history, and it then rebuilds that past in skewed terms and with unjust repercussions. These are the adverse effects that modern efforts within the Maronite community are trying to halt and reverse. It is a conscious pursuit of sovereignty over one’s own historical narrative first and then its extension towards the ways it is presented to the international community.

Chapter Three: Resettling Qadisha

I-A Past Made Present:

The rebranding of the Maronite identity has had its roots in consciously willed campaigns by both ecclesial and lay actors. It is largely founded on a restructuring of religious and social identity in the academic, political and social fields. This allows for the creation of a rationalized and acceptable contextualization of the modern national ethos. Clifford Geertz describes that ethos as "the tone, character, and quality of [a people's] life." He explains how religious belief and practice allow for the presentation of the ethos as being a reasonable adaptation to the condition of the world (Geertz 89). In a joint effort by lay and religious leaders of the Maronite community, the ethos of a uniqueness and perseverance is being promoted to that global community. In reconstructing history through a specific religious and social narrative, these identity shapers are then able to present their community with a continuity of national experience of persecution and endurance.

One such case of reconstruction is embodied by the historically, culturally and anthropologically unique discovery of the Asi al-Hadath cave and its mummies (Badawi 100). The Maronite mummies are eight individuals found in the Qadisha valley and dating to the thirteenth century. Based on papyri, clothes and other tools found in the grotto, it is possible to identify that they were most likely refugees from the nearby Hadath el-Gebbeh village (to which the grotto belongs). They had died there during the Mamluk siege of the region (GERSL 2015). In fact, this can be corroborated based on the work titled *Tarikh al-Azminah* of the abovementioned Maronite savant Patriarch Douaihy. In one of his passages he cites a prayer book he found whose margins mention the events of 1283 A.D. During that year, the Islamic Mamluk armies invaded the regions of the country of Tripoli. On the 24th of August, they headed

towards the village of Hadath el-Gebbeh over the Qadisha Valley whose inhabitants fled to the Asi grotto (Douaihy 261). It is very possible that the Maronite mummies had been the victims of this siege, as the circumstances of their death seem to indicate. The narrative of Patriarch Douaihy is in turn corroborated by the Secretary of the Mamluk Court at the time, Ibn `Abd al-Zahir, granting the story historical truth. What is important to note is the following: the Hadath village, in addition to the remaining regions assaulted by the Mamluks, belonged to Maronites who supported a rebellious leader who had fortified himself and his followers in Hadath and its grotto (Hourani). The insurrection that he had raised against the Mamluks is evocative of a national Maronite courage against persecution and religious oppression promoted as part of the creation stories of the nation. If one were to compare it with Patriarch John Maron and Byzantine persecution of the early Maronite refugees, the similarities are profound in the perpetuation and reinforcement of the communal memory of resistance that has shaped modern Maronite identity. This historical value of the discovery is as such clarified. The mummies provide a direct link to a significant period in regional and international history. They are also an emblem of the clash of two religious communities, one that reached massive proportions, known today as the centuries-long Muslim invasions and the subsequent Crusades.

As for the cultural value, it sheds light on the minute details of the past local culture. The mummies' clothes and possessions reveal themselves to be a cultural treasure indeed, religiously or otherwise. First of all, details such as the Syriac writings on papyri, the burial practices and dresses are a window into Maronite village life around 800 years ago. It is noteworthy that many of these practices remain alive in various regions of Lebanon. On the second hand, the particular patterns observed on the mummies' clothes, such as the two peacocks around the Tree of Life, remain cultural expressions of the modern Maronite Church. Additional discoveries such as

prayer scrolls reveal that such prayers are identical to ones still in use in the liturgical life of the Church (Hourani). It is a testimony to the continuity of certain cultural and national expressions of the community, reinforcing claims of the timeless unity of its religious identity.

In other words, these discoveries strengthen the belief promoted by several identity builders that a unique Maronite expression can be retraced from the past and continued in the future. Besides the contents of the Asi al-Hadath cave, the circumstances surrounding the discovery and subsequent events also offer a cultural (and nationalistic) value. They have allowed for the provision of a sense of rediscovery of Maronite history in a way linking it directly to the modern nation. Firstly, the region of the discovery itself sets the stage for a presentation of the oft-repeated story of hardworking Maronite villager who is persecuted for his faith. As previously discussed, Qadisha is honored in the symbolism of Maronite creation myths and national identity. It is a valley in which the Maronites found refuge from persecution. Its ancient monasteries and churches speak of a group whose faith led them to challenge the mountain as a people, as well as the invaders while hiding in the mountain. It is also a region that has preserved its natural beauty and distance from the encroachment of modern technological creations. In other words, it represents faith, tradition and geographical belonging, all in the face of constant persecution.

It is for this reason that the discovery of the mummies of persecuted Maronite villagers in Qadisha resonates profoundly in the Maronite national conscience. It is a tangible link between the myth of foundation and the present existence of Maronites. Through that discovery, the first Maronites who fought and died for their land and freedom in Smar Jbeil and Qadisha now come face to face with the Maronites who recognized the danger of the Islamic State at their borders. Through that understanding, the Maronite mummies are no longer individuals but symbols of a

nation. They are expanded beyond their material limitations to represent a wider identity. In other words, they become an embodiment of the myths of creation of the Maronite nation: the persecution, the resistance and the distinct traditions (Geertz 220). They are modern relics of Maronite nationalism, in the dual sense of the term. On one hand they are the small remnants of a greater historical existence. On the other hand they make these broader beliefs and longings accessible to the modern individual.

II-Turning a State into a Homeland:

This brings us to the second circumstance affecting the cultural and national role played by these mummies. Given their historical value, they have been exposed at the National Museum of Beirut in a special section dedicated solely to the discoveries of the Asi cave (Hourani). This is imperative in enshrining the discovery as having an impact on the cultural heritage of the entire Lebanese state. To elaborate, the efforts carried out to marry the notion of a Maronite homeland to that of the geographical borders of the Lebanese state have been achieved through this exposé. The Maronites have always been accepted as being part of the formation of that modern state given the role of Patriarch Hoayek in leading the delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to call for the recognition of Lebanon's independence (McCallum 353). However, the National Museum has now, perhaps inadvertently, enthroned the sufferings of that ethno-religious group in a position of honor. The Maronite story of persecution has become synonymous with the Lebanese one. To state this simply, the history of Lebanon was made Maronite, and the history of the Maronite was made Lebanese.

At first glance, this may seem contradictory to what Wimmer's theory on national identity and demographic size argues for. He posits that the more minoritarian and small a community is, the less will it identify with the national identity of its state. In fact, he continues

to argue that in order to do so, a community must first build trust founded on “beneficial exchange relationships with the state” (Wimmer 634, 2017). In other words, a community that is persecuted and overlooked by the state will not easily, if at all, identify with the state’s national identity. In that sense, the term “national” is identified to the state and delineated by its own geographical boundaries.

However, on closer look, Wimmer is proven correct in his analysis. The political entity that the Maronites refuse to identify with and in which they are a minority is the Arab world. When one considers both the Arab and Islamic identity on one side, and the Syro-Maronite one on the other, one understands that they are transnational identities. The territory of one state does not limit these nations’ boundaries, nor does it restrict their interactions, historical or modern. The Maronites were persecuted in Syria first and then in Lebanon. They now exist across the world. The Arab-Islamic identity is also presented as being transnational and covering the vastness of the Middle East. Viewed as such, the Maronite affinity with the Lebanese identity does not disprove Wimmer nor does it present itself as a case of exception to his theory. The community’s conflict with an Arab-Islamic identity must be situated in the entire Middle East. Since the identities themselves are transnational, so must the borders of these nations be considered as covering multiple states. In other words, Wimmer’s theory correctly explains the inter-communal tensions of both nations.

Additionally, Maronites view their attachment and relation to Lebanon as being pre-Islamic. Given that the Lebanese government remains highly sectarian and divided, no one ethno-religious group can politically coopt the Lebanese identity in modern times yet. As such, Maronites continue to identify deeply with the Lebanese state, not only as subjects, but also often as founders through the figure of their Patriarch Elias Peter Hoayek.

Through this, the Maronite spiritual leader yet again presents himself as a political leader. However, in the case of Lebanese independence, this leadership encompassed many other communities besides the Maronites themselves. When it comes to Lebanese national identity, Maronites do not view theirs as being separate yet compatible. Rather, Maronite identity is seen to be the mother of the Lebanese one, with the latter being inseparable from it. On one hand, the Maronites' identity is in part defined by a historical geographical political entity. On the other hand, the modern geographical political entity now becomes defined in part by the people's ethno-religious identity, especially with the President having to be Maronite.

Despite the outlining of all these rapprochements between both identities by the discovery of the mummies, it remains coincidental. It occurs in fact solely because this discovery remains anthropologically unique. It is the only known discovery of naturally mummified corpses in Lebanon, and yet it represents the Maronites as the native victims of an external Muslim invader. As such, the anthropological value of this discovery yet again abets in the modern solidification of the reaches of Maronite national identity and its definition.

III-Finding Oneself by Losing an Identity:

The Greater Family:

The mummies have advanced the rebirth of a Maronite identity in several ways. They shone a spotlight on the constant persecution of that community. They also drew a line of separation between it and the Muslim community through the Mamluks. Additionally, they helped pair the Maronite identity with the Lebanese one, intimately uniting both. This permits the presentation of the modern Lebanese land as a Maronite homeland.

However, what these mummies also do is present their death as the historically continuous persecution of Syriac Christians of the region by Arabs and Muslims. This naturally

reinforces the Maronite national narrative of the Martyr Church. Additionally, in distancing the Maronites from their neighboring Arab or Muslim communities, it pushes them to identify to other Christian ones. The Mamluks belonged to multiple conquered ethnic groups: Turkic, Arab, Syriac, Copt and other. However, they were slave soldiers of the invading Arab Muslims and continued to defend Islam when they took the reign of power. As such, they were intimately identified to that community (Encyclopaedia Britannica). In fact, the Mamluk leaders continued to pursue the creation of a caliphate to ensure the support of the Muslims of the region by politicizing their shared faith. For this reason, having been the known persecutors of the discovered victims, they yet again present a cause for the modern Maronites to find themselves estranged from the Arabs and the Muslims who are continually viewed as invaders, usurpers of power and persecutors.

Because of this, they find a shared history with other minority Syriac and Christian native groups within the Middle East, notably the Syriacs of modern-day Iraq and Syria. In addition to their long history of religious persecution by the Muslims, these Syriac communities tragically bore the grunt of yet another brutal persecution: the modern crimes of the Islamic States (BBC 2015). They have been raped, sold into slavery, massacred and exiled. Being hounded so brutally, their experience adds to their rapprochement with the Maronites. In other terms, the movement of the Maronites away from the Arab and Muslim identities leads them inversely towards a greater unity with global Syriac and Christian communities.

In fact, the political incorporation of the Maronites into an Arab world and identity did not happen organically or willingly. The National Pact of 1943 offered a concession between the Lebanese Christians and Muslims. The former had so far refused to have their state identified as a completely Arab one, while the latter insisted on being identified to the Arab world as a form

of Islamic Caliphate. The middle ground between both sides was to name Lebanon as a "state with an Arab face" (transliteration: *zou wajh `arabiy)* (El-Husseini 85).

This distance from the Arab identity and closeness to the Syriac one is expressed through various methods. One such means is the appropriation of the Sayfo massacre as being an injustice linked to the Maronites. When community leaders speak of crimes against their nation, they include Sayfo and Kafno on equal basis, the first towards the Syriacs of southeastern Turkey, the second towards those of Mount Lebanon. In both cases, it portrays Syriacs of different countries and Churches as being one nation. As such, it can be noted that the context in which an identity is being defined affects the boundaries of such a definition. For example, within Lebanon, the Maronite identity is stressed above all other generalized ones. However, in the context of the Middle East, facing the large number of Arabs in comparison, Maronites embrace their Syriac identity. This allows them to belong to a nation of far greater numbers, expanding from the relatively small confines of the Lebanese state to reach Syria, Iraq and even Turkey.

This appropriation and association of oneself to the Syriacs of the regions allows the Maronites to tap into a rich cultural heritage that has already been developed to a certain extent. A significant issue regarding the Syriacs of Lebanon is the loss of knowledge of their history and culture, largely abetted by educational programs based on Ottoman and European centrism. However, rather than have to rediscover this identity fully through their own efforts, the Maronites have only but to look to their fellow Syriacs to delve into a culture largely rediscovered over the years. This refers to the Syriac renewal of the Chaldeans in Iraq previously discussed. This form of bandwagonning allows for a surge in the restoration of Syriac indigenous culture in the Maronite community. It is thus that the nationalist movement of one community

becomes the building block of another nationalism. The new cultural awareness and renewal of one group starts the renewal of another by providing new knowledge of its history.

Another significant result of this appropriation would be the freedom with which Maronites can detach themselves from Arab identity. Having been immersed in such an identity due to the rampant culture of the Middle East since the violent Islamic conquests, the Maronites would have otherwise been incapable of detaching themselves from Arab culture and maintaining cohesion in a cultural vacuum. In having a rediscovered culture available to be immediately addressed and taught through its various expressions (language, painting, music, history, etc.), Maronites can fully transition through a direct substitution. The Church itself has largely preserved such a culture in the religious domain, for example by requiring its seminarians to learn liturgical Syriac fluently (Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary). However, the identification with other Syriac communities offers the Maronites a view into a living Syriac culture as practiced in the secular areas of daily life and away from the structure of the Church. As such, this expansion of one's identity to relate to larger non-Maronite Syriac communities around the Middle East opens the path to subsequently incorporate that culture into the Maronite one.

IV-The Writers of History:

While the impact on the Maronite community itself is shown, this process holds additional importance, as discussed by Maronite priest Father Armando Khoury. Given that most Syriacs lost their language around a century after the Islamic invasions, the vast treasury of Syriac work remains largely unavailable to the world. Not having been translated yet, prolific Syriac authors are yet unknown beyond the small circle of Syriac scholars. Per Father Khoury's words:

> "Syriac theological giants, such as Ephrem and Jacob of Sarug, left behind spiritual, theological and liturgical treasures locked in a vast treasury whose key is the Syriac language. A tiny portion of this wealth of writings has been translated into various modern languages and is, for the most part, inaccessible to a person who is not working in this field. These spiritual ancestors are our yet to be studied Augustines and Aquinases, yet to be exhibited Rembrandts and Picasos, yet to be heard Mozarts and Wagners, yet to be read Chaucers and Shakespeares, yet to be contemplated Platos and Aristotles, and yet to be translated Hugos and Dostoevskys" (Khoury).

The Maronites' (and fellow Syriacs') rediscovery of their culture will open the door for the exploration of yet unknown authors and works that will enrich the heritage of the entire world.

V-Out of Arabia:

Arab Winter:

Multiple authors have presented the Arab Spring as being a symbol of unity in the Middle East and good news to the freedom of minorities such as the Maronites (Hamid). The title itself given to the series of uprisings around the Middle East is an indication to the constant staging of the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) as a unified region, if not a unified culture. However, this presentation is both incorrect and detrimental. It presents the Arab Spring through a lens lacking in nuance of what was truly happening. It also fails in discerning the actual demands of the protestors, especially when they were pointed against fellow communities within

what is termed the "Arab world"[5] (Arab League). While the term "Arab Spring" was widely used by the media and analysts, it sets the foundation for a false analysis. Approaching a series of uprisings with the initial assumption of them being demonstrative of an entire nation's revolt is disadvantageous. This is due to it presenting the uprisings as unified revolts of members of the same nation.

Looking at the insurrections that resulted in toppled regimes, they were immediately followed by infighting between different militias such as in Libya (Abdessadok), between the secular army and Islamists in Egypt (Youssef), between factions backed by external powers such as in Yemen (BBC 2020) and finally by the vast massacres and genocides committed by the Islamic State within Iraq and Syria as the governments fought back. In other words, if the Arab Spring were to be approached with a more discerning look, it would very quickly reveal itself to have been an Arab Winter. It did not show a unified population in every state, or even a unified Arab population. Instead, it shed a strong light on the divisions between the Sunnis and Shiites of Yemen, reflected on a wider scale by the involvement of what is termed as a Persian, Shia-majority Iran against an Arab, Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia (BBC 2020). It also revealed the division between Islamists and more moderate (or even secularizing) communities in Egypt (Fakir and Yerkes).

VI-Stranger in One's Home:

Another significant concern underlying the façade of unity conveyed by the term "Arab Spring" is the actor against whom these uprisings were addressed. The governments are accused of corruption and oppression. In many instances, these unjust methods of leadership and rule

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[5] The Arab World refers to state members of the Arab League. Given the lack of heterogeneity in culture, ethnicity and political opinion, the term is first included within quotations to identify it as a quoted title. However, throughout the study it will continue to be addressed as such for the sake of efficiency and lack of other general indicators at the moment.

were turned against minorities within the many states forming the Arab League. The status of Copts in Egypt is one of many rampant practices of corruption within the legal, civil and administrative systems of a government. The constant kidnapping of Coptic girls and their forced conversions to Islam and marriages, the multiple bombings and burnings of churches, the difficulty to find jobs when one is a Copt, and the rampant intimidation and threats against members of this community are reasons why they participated in the uprisings (World Watch Monitor). Additionally, the temporary break of power of these governments permitted many activists to voice concerns regarding their status, a voicing which would have previously been unheard or quelled by governmental powers. However, these attempts were yet again overwhelmingly repressed by both the army and fellow civilians who painted the Coptic demands as those of a minority failing to equal in priority the demands of the nation (Monier).

Such events are an expression of the persecution of minorities in the Middle East. Even further yet, it pinpoints the question underlying this segregation and fueling the ostracizing. In her essay on sectarianism in the region, Fanar Haddad discusses what she terms as "secular sectarianism". The seemingly sectarian divisions in the Middle East, she argues, are in fact not theological in nature. Taking the example of Sunnis and Shias, the disagreement for many members of these communities is, in fact, about their vision for the nation. It embraces social class and economic status, political allegiances, social policies and many others. In other words, when an Iraqi Sunni for example protests against the Shia, his opposition is towards their political allegiance to Iran rather than to a theological position. This approach bears important consequential weight on religious minorities like the Maronites in the Middle East, given that their sectarian belonging is associated with a diverging, opposing and rejected view of the nation than that of the majority. Haddad makes the point that the nation is identified with the sectarian

majority, becoming a secular sectarianism, paving the way for Elizabeth Monier's warnings against the use of the term "minority".

Monier stresses that encouraging the term "minority" is an advancement of a community's otherness. To separate ethno-religious communities from others by emphasizing their minority status is to separate their national vision from that of the majority. In light of Haddad's analysis of secular sectarianism, highlighting a minority status is akin to highlighting the divergence of the given community from the remaining national unity. In fact, it presents the minority community as a threat to that proposed unity (Monier).

Arab Anathema:

While Monier calls for the lessening of such external pronouncement of division, these differences remain nevertheless present. Whether secular or religious, ethnic or political, minorities still voiced their opposition during the Arab Spring uprisings. This opposition was against the governments of Arab states. As such, it was partially against the application of the Arab identity and policies of these governments. One of the most notable examples of this identity-related uprising comes out of northern war-stricken Syria. After ISIS had overrun the region, various minority groups formed a military coalition to retake it independently of the Syrian regime (Sweeney). These groups, including Kurdish and Syriac militias, then governed the reclaimed lands by issuing official documents in their respective languages. The brutality and initial military success of the Islamic State had kept centralized Arab government forces at bay, thus allowing minority cultures and autonomy to surface, if only briefly.

Looking west to the Maghreb, the Amazighs (Maddy-Weitzman 118) also echo these calls for official recognition of their uniqueness. Though the movement started several decades prior to the Arab Spring, it remains alive and active, having achieved the recognition and

teaching of the Tamazight language in some Moroccan schools. In other words, these uprisings and protests reveal yet another layer of disunity in the so-called Arab-world: between the Arab-Islamic states and their minoritarian subjects. An Algerian author, Ramdane Achab, summarized the impact of these ethnic uprisings on the Arab world when he explained that the Amazigh movement has pushed Algeria to confront its state's "Arabo-Islamic ideology and its political, cultural and linguistic monolithism" (Kestler-D'Amours). These nationalistic movements are pushing the Arab world to confront its hidden diversity.

VII-The Cedar Before Spring:

Lebanese Before Arab:

Of the many cases of uprising or protest against states belonging to the Arab League, the Lebanese case of 2005 stands out for several reasons. While the Arab Spring involved civilians rising up mainly against their own governments, the Lebanese experienced a different sort of movement. It is true that protests were held for a period of almost a year in 2011, coinciding with other protests of the Arab Spring. However, the series of protests that began six years before the Arab Spring became what has come to be termed as the "Cedar Revolution" (Jaafar and Stephan 169).

It was indeed aimed at the government, but the aim was far broader than the simple resignation of ministers or a president. Its primary goal was the withdrawal of the almost 15,000 Syrian troops from Lebanese grounds, a goal it managed to achieve peacefully. The Cedar Revolution was as such highly nationalistic regarding its internal and external demands. They can in fact be presented as follows: the setting aside of internal and external interventions in what would be an independent Lebanese state.

The internal interventions are of a sectarian nature. The Lebanese government is still divided to give political representation to the three major religious groups. The agreement reached through the National Pact of 1943 was reinforced at the Taif Agreement that officially ended the civil war ignited in the 1970s (The Taif Agreement). Another aspect of Lebanese sectarianism is the continuation of the Ottoman Millet system. Each religious community continues to rule its own affairs, maintaining independent Family Laws (Library of Congress 2019). Finally, political parties remain sectarian. Their MPs are largely part of the same religious affiliation and claim to represent the needs of their respective communities (Collard). It is against all these sectarian practices that the Cedar Revolution protested.

While at first glance the Cedar Revolution may appear to support a unification of various Arab groups above their dividing differences, religious or otherwise, a more critical look would reveal otherwise. A protest against the sectarian divisions within Lebanon is one in support of the Lebanese identity of the citizens. It reveals an identity crisis within the country, in which large swathes of the population seek a unity that surpasses religious belonging. As much as the Cedar Revolution protested against the government, it still pushed for the establishment of the secular governmental authority as the only legally valid one within the state's borders. In other words, regarding internal power, the Lebanese uprising was dualistic. It criticized the corruption of the government, but it also popularly declared it as the only condition to define one's Lebanese identity.

As such, given the political influence of various states on different religious groups in Lebanon, the Cedar Revolution may be seen as a revolt against their political presence in Lebanon. Reflecting the abovementioned analysis of the Arab Spring, this movement was far from being one of Arab unity. Let us analyze the example of Iran and its political proxy

Hezbollah (Arabic for "Party of God"). The radical Shia political party finds its origin in the Persian maneuvering. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard aided in the formation of the Islamic militias during the Lebanese civil war of 1975. These militias later united to form the Hezbollah (Norton 4). The purpose was to spread the ideals of the Islamic Iranian Revolution, ideals that were both religious and political. It included the promotion of Shia Islam around the world, as well as fighting states or groups that are deemed unjust or against the growth of this religion.

The peaceful revolt against the influence of Shiism in Lebanese politics is in itself also an echo of Secular Sectarianism. While the concerns about religious influence remain present, they are also revealed to be fears about the interference of other states. Shia clerics affiliated to Hezbollah are seen as religious figures promoting the political goals of Iran (Norton 100). Given that Iran is a theocracy, it serves as a clear example to this religious and political intertwining. The Wilayat al-Fakih, or the Guardianship of the Jurisprudence, is a concept in the Twelver Shiism religious branch. It places the final authority of interpretation of Islamic law into the hands of the most learned Shia authority. This Jurist's duty is to guard the people of Islam against error, including the application of theoretical moral law in all aspects of life, public as much as personal (Momen 165). It is through this concept that the political leadership in Iran has become so intertwined with its religious one. In an ethical government, as this religious branch believes, politics cannot be separated from religious law, nor the governor from the cleric (Alagha 89). Such a marriage between religious and political governance is similarly reflected by Sunni states such as Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi Islam and its close ties to the Sunni political groups in Lebanon (Smyth). Though Iran is not an Arab state, it clearly outlines the dynamics against which the Cedar Revolution was protesting.

For all these reasons, it cannot be claimed that this movement was an early burgeoning of the following series of revolts in the Arab world. In fact, the opposite can be argued for. Though this study does not aim to study their case thoroughly, it remains imperative to discuss the Cedar Revolution. The Lebanese uprising, similarly to ones across the Arab world, announced a popular opposition to Pan-Arabism. Citizens of all these states have repeatedly proclaimed their refusal of foreign interference, even that of fellow Arab states. It is as such not unfounded to assert that the Arab Spring, as well as the Cedar Revolution, was a movement reinforcing separate national identities in what was presented as a transnational political event. They weakened intra and inter-national identities in support of simply national ones.

The Church Before State:

The positive outcome of the revolutions, summarized as the strengthening of national identity and cohesion, is not the complete aftermath. The civil war that plagued Syria is also a result of the misnamed Arab Spring. While some states witnessed the dimming of intra-national or sub-national identities, others saw these identity-based tensions boil to the surface, in violent ways. Syria's brutal war is the ruthless clash of such identities. In fact, while the Cedar Revolution called for secularism, the Syrian conflict saw the political and religious differences of states and militias enter into a war of ethnic and religious cleansing. For example, the Iran-backed Hezbollah joined the war alongside other religious minorities such as the Alawite government of Bachar el-Assad. The anti-governmental militias, largely Sunni and backed by Turkey and Saudi Arabia, mixed their political grievances with religious fundamentalism (Council on Foreign Relations). Hence, groups such as the Nusra Front and the Islamic State became yet another expression of a violent and political Islam (Bayat 76).

This radicalization was not limited to the reinforcement of one's identity, but it also spilled over to the eradication of identities seen as threatening or undesired. As such, the genocidal undertakings and crimes of the Islamic State were not simply against the Syrian government but also religious groups seen as allied to the it: Alawites, Shiites and Christians. This analysis helps elucidate the reason the Islamic State's actions have helped ignite or encourage identity building among minority groups such as the Maronites of Lebanon.

Though the militias of Islamic groups did not progress deeply within the Lebanese borders as they did in Iraq and Syria, their threat was ever present. Certainly, fractures in national unity resurfaced within Lebanon because of the Syrian war. Clashes between Alawites, Shiites and Sunnis occurred multiple times (International Crisis Group).

Paradoxically, the current uprisings in Lebanon also support the suspicion of fragility in national unity within states of the Arab world. The ongoing protests that started in October of 2019 showed the same pattern as those of the Cedar Revolution. They started with a joint call for secular and united governing of all Lebanese citizens. Additionally, they rose against corruption with the slogan of "all means all", referring to the popular demand of the resignation of the entire government: Ministers, Parliamentarians and even the President. One of the most symbolic traits of the current uprising has been the lack of any party flags. The Lebanese flag has been the only one welcomed into the protests, signifying the unity of the people against the governing class (Reuters 2019).

However, sectarian divisions have recently once again started to resurface within the protest or the Lebanese society. It is expected for people who support certain parties or religious communities, especially parties claiming to represent the benefits of such religious communities, to feel threatened when the governance of such parties is threatened. Given how intertwined

religion and politics are in Lebanon, very often protests against parties may be mistaken for protests against one's religion. Additionally, certain slights or derogatory remarks made towards other religious communities have fueled demonstrations of power and religious identity (Molana-Allen). For example, after an insulting video by a Sunni man was made about the Shia, groups of Shiite men had descended into the Lebanese squares shouting "Shia, Shia". In response to this demonstration of religious identity, Sunni men answered with the same regarding their own religious belonging (Al Jazeera). Multiple times, such groups had been armed and committed acts of violence against peaceful protestors. As such, when such uprisings fail to solidify national unity, or even when they do, the response of those who do not identify to them can be contradictory to the movement's pursuits. While some citizens move towards a strengthening of national identity above sub-national ones, others view this as a threat. As such, unifying movements can result in further degradation of national unity and the strengthening of religious identity.

When these two results intertwine, the outcome will be as follows. On one hand, the political representatives of various religious communities are weakened or completely removed. Saad Hariri, the head of the leading Sunni party in Lebanon, had resigned from his duties as Prime Minister (Reuters 2019). On the other hand, religious identities and their differences are strengthened and pushed to the forefront of social and political disagreements. These changes create a society in which the stable, or more precisely the stabilizing, political forces are no longer in function, while tensions remain strong. Pre-existing venues of complaint and expression of disagreement, particularly via governmental channels such as parliamentarian debates by representatives of communities, become obsolete. If, as is the case of Lebanon, the civil society and movement is all embracing, tensions start to move towards more aggressive and

unmonitored channels such as acts of street violence and militia formation. Given that some religious communities are heavily armed in Lebanon, such as the Hezbollah Shiite party, civil war no longer becomes a farfetched idea.

Additionally, with a lack of political representation of religious communities, the only remaining visible uncontested leadership to them lies in the religious hierarchy. While debates regarding Muslim leadership lie at the heart of the Sunni-Shiite schism, for Maronites there is no contestation. The head of the Church is the Patriarch, and the authority of all other clerics, religious groups, monastic communities and the moral life of its members comes from him. Together with his fellow bishops members of the Synod, the Patriarch decides of key issues surrounding the Maronite Church (Catholic Church). For a community threatened by armed militias and the weakening of its political representation, aggregating more faithfully and strongly around their remaining symbol of unity and shared identity becomes ever more important. In fact, many people had been calling on current Patriarch Mar Bechara Rai to express his position on the ongoing protests. As he has continued to do so, he has met with various political representatives, including the President. He has also organized communal prayer with the Maronite community of Lebanon for the sake of the country amidst the protests (Crux). However, even if as current patriarch he were to be rejected by Maronites, the position itself remains a representation and source of unity, given that the Patriarchate itself is a defining factor of membership within the Maronite Church. As such, whether or not the current patriarch has the people's support does not affect the central role of that position for modern Maronite identity.

The Cedar Before Syria:

While the Cedar Revolution at first glance may appear to showcase the unity of two million Lebanese, around half the population, against the presence of the Syrian army within

Lebanese borders, it also points to discord. Some parties are allied to or offer support to the Syrian regime. This includes the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), formerly led by Michel Aoun, the current President of the state. This alliance creates a strong rift within the Lebanese Maronite community, given that it has political and religious implications. The two other parties that claim to mainly defend the Maronite community are the Lebanese Forces and the Lebanese Phalangists. Both of these parties are antagonistic towards the Syrian regime. Additionally, despite some periodical rapprochement, they remain at odds with the FPM. They reject the close involvement of the Syrian regime in Lebanese politics, as well as the FPM's close collaboration with that regime (Assi 207).

This divergence goes back to the 1975 civil war. Despite the points of discord being different, the Lebanese Forces, headed by Geagea, and the Lebanese Army of General Aoun entered into a violent war against each other. Some of the disagreement was rooted in their conflicting approaches to the Taif Accords, the involvement of the Syrian regime in Lebanon and the military presence of both. On the other hand, there had been times during the Lebanese civil war when they had stood united against Syrian forces (Ramia).

This analysis of the history and circumstances of recent uprisings within Arab states in general and Lebanon in particular elucidates several points regarding Maronite identity. It is evident that Arab states are not united within a form of pan-Arabism, whether on the governmental or popular level. Additionally, a deeper deconstruction of events reveals that in fact, citizens, political parties and governments within the Arab League are in fact highly antagonistic towards each other. States have been involved in wars within other states. Lebanon, currently witnessing an extensive protest in support of a united Lebanese identity, continues to struggle with its sectarian and political divisions. Religious communities remain sharply

alienated from each other, and sectarian tensions once again begin to come to cast a doubt on the unity of the population.

Finally, Maronites themselves fail to have a unified political representation, divided amongst two main parties who have historically been violently antagonist towards each other. As such, when political representation has not broken down, it remains tense. As such, the only unifying point for all Lebanese Maronites has been the patriarchate of their Church, even when disagreement may occur regarding the man filling the role. Given all these political disagreements and the breaking down of democratic representation, tensions among various communities rise, civilians have stronger recourse to religious belonging and religious nationalism becomes rampant again. The only historically consistent national identity has been a religious one. This is why we see Maronite nationalism growing. In other words, the Millet system is coming back as the means of managing community belonging in the Middle East. Each religious community continues to identify itself as a sub-nation within states. Otherwise, strong communities appropriate the state's identity by linking it to their own religious one.

VIII-The Homeland in the Horizon:

After discussing the breaking down of other forms of identities in Lebanon, and before delving into the specifics of what constitutes Syriac culture, the study will analyze how the Maronite identity itself is being built up via multiple political measures. On the local, regional and international stage, this identity is being cemented as an independent one worthy of recognition. The actions of Shadi Khalloul Risho and the town of Jish will provide a case study to how Maronite nationalism is being brought back to the forefront of identity formation in the Middle East. The town, made mostly of Maronites, has established Aramaic as a language of education in its school. The purpose of this action is to reconnect the children to their heritage

and their ancestral language. Additionally, it is also intended to render the language a living one in order to reestablish it as the form of communication among Maronites.

These educational efforts are paralleled by a focus on Syriac in the liturgical services of the town's Maronite church (Stoffel). The purpose of this marriage of the educational and religious facets of the population is to emphasize the value of a united language in national identity. The unity is not simply horizontal, drawing on the interconnectedness of Maronites in the town or elsewhere. It is also vertical in time, connecting them more deeply to their ancestors and historical existence. Given that language is one of the core identifiers of a nation, maintaining or reinstating one that is unified with past generations expounds on the continuity of culture but also religion. Just as the similarity of content of the parchments found with the mummies of Qadisha shows that the Maronites of the region have been using the same prayers throughout the years, so does the unity of the language build on that continuity. As such, the impact of use is twofold and symbiotic. The use of Syriac in liturgy stresses its importance as a liturgical language and a sign of stability. It gives it strong value to incentivize the new generations to study it. At the same time, studying it through structured programs also renders it better understood and managed, turning it again into a living language. This justifies continuing its use in the liturgy of the Church to a population that becomes more and more aware of its unifying bond and its immediate meaning. The case of the town of Jish is a microcosm of the efficiency of reviving a language, its unifying power and implications on national identity.

The importance of this town and its inhabitants is not restricted to language, however. In September of 2014, the Israeli Ministry of Interior Affairs ruled to allow Christians to identify as "Arameans" on their legal documents. This move is critical since it is the first case of a Middle Eastern government at the state level to recognize the Aramean ethnicity as being a nationality,

keeping in mind that many Arab states continue to be at war with Israel and do not recognize it as a legitimate state (BBC 2019). Given that Syriac is a dialect of Aramean, Christian groups that identify as the former are also eligible to register as the latter. This includes the Maronites. In fact, Jacob Khalloul, the son of Shadi, happens to be the little boy from the town of Jish to have been the first registered Aramean (World Council of Arameans).

This declaration gained the criticism of many leaders of the Christian community in Israel, even of Churches included within the identity of "Aramean". For example, the leadership of the Greek Orthodox Church has rejected this step as one aimed at dividing the Arabs of Israel between Christian and Muslim, given that only Christian groups can claim that new nationality (Pravoslavie). However, other groups around the world, especially espousing Aramean or Syriac identity, have praised the move as one that upholds and preserves the rights to self-identification of Christian minorities (World Council of Arameans). Setting the political and social motives of Israeli politicians aside, the move remains an identifier of Christian pursuit of Aramean/Syriac identity. Additionally, while Maronites are politically cut off from their co-religionists in surrounding Arab states, they also remain members of a group of international communities and Churches. In fact, given that members of these Churches who reside outside of Israel, whether in Arab states or elsewhere, have also expressed their support for the nationality, the impact on the general Christian connection to this identification will not be restricted by Middle Eastern politics.

In fact, the repercussions of this step will be twofold. On the one hand, it has created in the minds of many Middle Eastern Christians a separation from the Muslim community. Even if groups refuse to accept this new identity, it has been made into an official recognition of distinction. One is no longer considered an Arab de facto. This identity has now become a

conscious choice. As such, both Arab and Aramean (Syriac) identities have become further politicized. In other words, the split has been turned from an individual or unofficial measure into one recognized on the official government level and to which an individual has to agree too. What the Israeli government's law has done is turn the Arab identity into a choice rather than an established fact in the consciousness of its citizens and that of others outside its borders.

Additionally, as this public, social and legal distinction was being created, it was also intertwining the Aramean (Syriac) identity to a religious one. Indeed, given that the identification is open solely to individuals belonging to Christian Churches, the government has rendered it into an ethno-religious matter. It reflects both the local interlacing of secular and religious identities witnessed in Jish as a case study, as well as the Maronites' understanding of their founding as being intimately linked to that of the Lebanese state. To be concise, one's Church now also defines one's national identity. As such, this becomes a modern echoing of the story of the first spiritual leader of the Maronite Church, Patriarch John Maron, who is also deemed the first political leader of that people. It also outlines the founding of the political entity of modern Lebanon through the direct efforts of yet another Patriarch, Hoayek. Simply put, Israel has indirectly recognized some Middle Eastern Christians, including Maronites, as being distinct from Muslims for more than just religious reasons.

These local and national repercussions of Shadi Khalloul's actions also extend to reach the international scene. On November 26, 2014, he was invited by the World Aramaic Council (WAC) to offer a speech at the United Nations' seventh session of the Forum on Minority Issues on "preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities" (United Nations). The speech given in Geneva was published on the WAC's website, an NGO that functions in a "special consultative status with the social council of the United Nations". The

speech consists of a formal request to the United for the recognition of violence and crimes committed against Arameans in the last century, recognition and action against ongoing crimes and the recognition of Arameans by the UN members as a nation (World Council of Arameans). The conclusion of this speech is a union point highlighting the actions of Khalloul. His address to the UN concluded with a statement declaring “it is about time to grant the native Aramean people their own democratic state in the land of their ancestors” (World Council of Arameans).

Through that statement, the value of being recognized as a distinct nationality by a member state of the United Nations (UN) comes to the foreground. Despite Israel’s position of war with some Arab states, it has the status of a sovereign state at the UN, a status that recognizes its law on Arameans as legal. As such, the community now has a precedence of being recognized as a nation by a member state at the UN. We see here the same measures occurring as had happened before the recognition of the state of Israel itself by the UN. The first step was the promotion of a unified ethno-religious identity. This happened through the development of the Hebrew language into the modern spoken version. It also created a common national history by refocusing on the history of the Biblical Israelites as the ancestors of world Jewry. Finally, leaders of the community emerged across the world, took efficient measures to solidify the common goal for a national homeland (Augustyn).

This history outlines that when some members of a nation or group begin to publicly discuss a shared homeland, this theoretical concept becomes a reality for others to support. Such a goal was achieved through the Balfour Declaration. Issued by the United Kingdom’s Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour on November 2nd, 1917, the Declaration was part of a letter addressed to Lord Rothschild. It was key in building momentum for the creation of the modern state of Israel. While the purpose of building a home for world Jewry was already in motion via activities of

organizations such as the World Zionist Organization, the Declaration managed to give shape to this effort by delineating a specific location, Palestine, as a possible homeland. It also offered the support of a strong political entity, the Kingdom of Great Britain. However, the support was not specifically for an independent state but for "the establishment in Palestine of a national *home*" (Zeidan). Through consecutive events that included the immigration of Jews to Palestine and a series of armed conflicts and suspected massacres, Israel was finally formed as a Jewish state (Pappe xiii).

This brief case study of the formation of Israel demonstrates how the actions of Khalloul and the World Aramaic Council have been taken in the footsteps of a previous example of nationalistic state formation. The first important steps are the creation of the concept of an Aramaic nation. This has been achieved through the reinstitution of Syriac as a spoken language. It renders it a living one in the sense that it is made accessible and passed on to the next generation. Additionally, the registration of Khalloul's son as the first Aramean gives official backing to the nationality as something true and an open choice, given that people may now register as such. Finally, the request made to the United Nations for an Aramaic "state in the land of their ancestors" echoes the attempts by Jews to build a home for themselves in Palestine (World Council of Arameans).

Doubts about the significance of these actions may address the fact that states in the modern Middle East have been established for decades, meaning that the lack of political instability that allowed the creation of the state of Israel no longer exists. However, this can be negated through the events that have occurred for the past decade in Iraq and Syria. The rise of the Islamic State has shown that the establishment of new proto-states in the Middle East is still a reality. While this example in itself had necessitated the use of violence, it also proves that many

governments do not have full reign over their lands, borders and citizens. One has only to look at the several new calls for statehood or federal self-rule in Syria, Turkey and Iraq to assess the veracity of this analysis. As previously mentioned, groups such as the Amazighs and the Syriacs have not only continued to call for their own self-rule but for various periods of time have also managed to control swathes of land with independent militias and the issuing of official documentation. In these circumstances, the Syriacs (through Kurdish forces) had indeed managed to create what may also be considered an independent regional self-rule or a national proto-state (Radpey).

IX-Rise of the Phoenix:

One Nation:

The measures taken by leaders of the Aramaic community such as Tur Levnon or Khalloul have already created a widespread awareness of Aramaic nationalism. Organizations for the promotion of Aramaic culture are present in a large number of countries especially in the Middle East, Europe and North America. However, the concept of an Aramaic nation did not start with these leaders. The Syriacs of Iraq experienced their own cultural revival and continue to do so. This allows Maronites identifying as members of the larger Aramaic community to build on the preexisting structures. The recognition of Aramaic nationality for example creates a precedent for Maronites elsewhere in the Middle East to also call for their recognition as non-Arabs. Additionally, the rediscovery of aspects of Syriac civilization such as authors and philosophers also offers Maronites a distinct culture to which they can relate. In other terms, the abovementioned aspirations and achievements of Aramaics are to be considered those of Maronites as well.

<u>One Tongue:</u>

Khalloul's efforts are not the only measures taken by members of the Maronite community. Tur Levnon's efforts in Lebanon have incorporated several Maronite institutes and parishes that now offer language courses (Tur Levnon). The teaching of the language in such institutions achieves identical results to those of the town of Jish. Given both their religious and educational characteristics, students interact with Syriac outside the liturgical field. On the other hand, they also benefit of the religious characteristic of these institutes, thus intertwining the language with a broader religious purpose and identity.

The success of the establishment of these linguistic classes comes in large part as a result of the cooperation of the Maronite Church itself. The role of the Church applies in two separate manners. First, it maintains the use of the language in the liturgies via its priests and their formation. Maronite priests are required to study Syriac in order to speak it and read it in their services (Maronite Diocese of Saint Maron). It was this central role of the language in the liturgy of the Church that allowed to be preserved for so long in lands where it had otherwise disappeared. In a country whose national language is Arabic, it was the Maronite Church that preserved the linguistic memory among both its institutions and its members who continue to hear it in their liturgies. Secondly, the same Church runs these institutions that teach Syriac (Tur Levnon). The success of the incorporation of Syriac is largely due to the openness of the Church to this particular language. As the Church leadership seeks to maintain knowledge of its liturgical language, it has encouraged its promotion to the younger generations in order to preserve its own culture.

Additionally, children in Lebanon are being taught Syriac in their own places of residence through communal efforts organized in towns and municipalities. Their parents film

their linguistic efforts and post them online in a sense of pride regarding one's language. The purpose of these actions is also to encourage others to be involved in similar activities by creating a virtual community (Tur Levnon 2019).

The role of social media and the Internet in creating and reinforcing national identity lies in their capacity to build links between people and communities who would otherwise remain separated. As Thomas Eriksen argues, the Internet provides a medium for nations that are dispersed through emigration, forced displacement or loss of land. Given the access to it above and despite physical borders, the Internet helps counteract the restrictions and monitoring placed by governments on nationalist movements. Additionally, it is a meeting point for those who identify as members of a nation but remain dispersed. For example, Maronites who have never experienced a direct knowledge of Lebanon due to distance and cost can now know much about it, encounter its people, its cultures and its geographical sites via the Internet. Rather than uniting the world as one nation, the Internet has allowed for greater partitioning through chat rooms, political journalism, online national groups and other forms of virtual social groupings.

Another hurdle surpassed by the Internet is the ignorance of individuals of each other's existence. When they begin to discover others with similar opinions, they are now able to interact and build a sense of unity of purpose. The Internet can itself then become a virtual community joining people across distances. This is why the spread of videos of individuals learning and speaking Syriac promotes a sense of common identity among Maronites. Those who are not part of communities in which Syriac is being fostered can now find their communities online. Considering such implications, the argument can be presented that such efforts create a virtual Syriac-Maronite nation.

The Death of a Language:

Perhaps one of the most effective ways in which the Internet has served Maronite nationalism, also known as Maronitism (Hagopian 101), found its beginning before the efforts to teach and expand the use of Syriac among Maronites had started. The virtual medium played a role in raising linguistic awareness regarding the community's forms of communication. Despite Arabic being indicated as the official language of states such as Lebanon and Syria, the spoken dialects are in fact not purely Arabic. *Fusha*, also known as Classical Arabic (CA) or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), is not applied in the day-to-day use of native Arabic speakers. There are variations in the Arabic language, and while some linguist separate MSA from CA, the distinction is not always made (Badawi, Carter and Gully 2). They will as such be used to refer to the same literary and written form of Arabic. In Lebanon, it is generally used in formal education, by news outlets such as political magazines and channels and some speeches (Annahar). However, it is never spoken for discussion, even formally, outside the classroom. What is used in interactions outside these limited contexts is termed the "Lebanese dialect" (Elgibali 58).

These local languages, varying between so-called Arab states, are described as dialects of the Arabic language. However, several proponents of the distinction between the Lebanese and Arabic languages accuse this approach as being a misnomer permitting the continuation of cultural destruction and the political abuse of linguistics. Lebanese is not a dialect of Arabic, they state. They continue to quote studies that they believe show how Lebanese is a mix of Syriac and Arabic, among other languages. As such, what are termed the vernacular Arabics of the Middle East are in fact the joining of local dialects with some form of Arabic. It would

subsequently be more precise to state that individuals in Lebanon do not speak the Lebanese dialect of Arabic but rather Lebanese *and* Standard Arabic (Lebanese Language Institute).

The phenomenon of using Arabic for some aspects of one's life, such as literature and official documents, while continuing the use of Lebanese (or other languages) for daily interactions is termed by Sherif Shubashy as a *linguistic schizophrenia.* A previous deputy minister of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Shubashy wrote extensively on the dilemma between the *'ammiyya* and the *fusha*, or the vernacular and classical Arabics. In his contentious book "Long Live the Arabic Language", Shubashy argues that those who are literate enough to have been taught *fusha* Arabic have to live through a form of linguistic schizophrenia, bearing two different personalities when dealing aspects of their lives in which *'ammiyya* or *fusha* are used. He continues to argue that *'ammiyya* is not Arabic at all, adding that if Standard Arabic was, as its title states, the standard for the Arabic language, then up to half of those considered Arabophones would be disqualified given that they don't speak it (Choubachy 119).

An assistant professor of Near Eastern Studies at Boston College, Franck Salameh, builds on this criticism by adding that Standard Arabic is falling behind as a taught language, because Arab states prefer to prepare their citizens for the world's requirements in language proficiency, teaching them English for example. He continues to add that unifying movements on the level and spread of Pan-Arabism often fail. He is not referring to the cultural or political aspects of Pan-Arabism but rather its linguistic one that aims to unify Arab states with one language (Salameh).

The Language of Blasphemy:

With political pan-Arabism having failed in the past, its linguistic version is simply an added layer to a deeply rooted identity issue in the Arab world. They are intertwined given that

language is an identifier of culture and a strong influence in nationalistic politics. Since language is at the core of one's identity, it has throughout history been at the center of political quarrels and movements. Its power to unite or divide can be put to use by political leaders. William Safran explains how "languages are not only tools of nation-building but also means of political control. That is why ethnic minorities use language—for example, the demand for bilingualism — as a political strategy — as 'a form of protest against political domination'" (Saffran). For example, while Maronites use Syriac to unite their community on one hand, Arabic is used to assimilate minorities across the Middle East into one nation. An indication of this political use is hinted at in the negative outbursts caused in Egypt by Shubashy's criticism of Arabic. Along with being pushed to resign his post as Deputy Minister of Culture, Shubashy's book was accused of following a colonialist or Zionist mentality bent on destroying Arabic, the Arab world and Islam (Salameh).

The intermingling of religion with language is central to several arguments on which this study is built. Islam, similarly to Maronite Catholicism, is strongly tied to a language. While Arabic is the language of the Quran, Syriac is that of the Maronite Liturgy (Ringgren and Sinai). As such, the attack against one is an attack against the other in the thoughts of many thinkers and leaders. The Egyptian paper *Islamic Standard* published an article accusing Shubashy's book's aim of being "none other than the Holy Qur'an itself, and to cause Muslims to eventually lose their identity and become submerged into the ocean of globalization" (Salameh). Echoing this accusation, then-president Hosni Mubarak addressed these "initiatives calling for the modification of Arabic vocabulary and grammar; the modification of God's chosen language no less; the holy language in which he revealed his message to the [Muhammad]" (Salameh). This

religious outrage caused by the publication of a book regarding language unveils the strong connection between the two.

The Language of God:

Whatever Shubashy's intentions towards Islam in publishing a book about Arabic, the conclusions of the *Islamic Standard*, Mubarak and many others retain truth in some ways. The arguments for the learning of Syriac include two very significant ones regarding Islam, the first rejecting it and the second choosing the Maronite identity. Arabic became the official language in Lebanon for many reasons, but one of the strongest causes was the Islamic wars of conquest into the Levant. The incursions and social upheavals brought Arabic extensively to the Syriac-speaking inhabitants of the Levant (The Metropolitan Museum of Art). Given the extended experience of persecution, massacres and displacement imposed on the Maronites, the link for many between Arabic and conquest is identifiable. The Islamic wars brought the religion on a mass scale into Lebanon via conquest, rendering it to many of the native Maronites as the religion of the invader. Pairing this with the close religious and historical ties of the Maronite Church with Syriac, the link between language, religion and politics is made clear.

This historical fear of cultural erasure expressed in language was strengthened by ISIS' iconoclasm. It was a representation of yet another Islamic state invading the land of Syriacs with the intention of destroying aspects of their culture. In that historical light, the planned emptying of the Middle East of its native Syriacs and the destruction and replacement of their language is not a new but ongoing phenomenon (Gardner). Bent on bringing Islam by force to them, the modern Islamic State displaced Syriac-speaking Christian masses and instilled Arabic classes instead (Engel). As such, to reject subjugation is to maintain one's faith but also one's original language, Syriac.

One such modern example comes out of the Syriac diaspora in the United States. Though the study addresses a specific population of the Maronite community, examples of measures taken by fellow members across the world are highly indicative of the permeation and spread of such identity convictions of the universal Church. A Coalition of American Assyrians and Maronites sent an official letter to the Arab American Institute Foundation in October of 2001 requesting that the latter cease to misrepresent either of these communities as being Arab in their statistics on Arab Americans. The arguments were similar to other ones mentioned here regarding the distinction of Maronites from Arabs, such as them being native inhabitants of Lebanon who are distinct from the Arab ethnicity and preceding the Arab conquests (Kayyali 107).

X-We Speak As We Pray:

In addition to external aggression, internal changes also affect the tide of a language within a community. This bears special insight into the role of the Church in building identity. As it incorporated Arabic and let go of Syriac in its liturgy, it became more accessible to the faithful whose language also had been transformed beforehand. However, replacing Syriac with Arabic also declares to the Maronites that this language has become incorporated into their identity. After having clearly drawn the link between faith and language for both Christians and Muslims in the Middle East, one can subsequently infer that the language of the Church strongly defines, or sanctions, its use by its members. If the Patriarch, the priests and the Liturgy incorporate Arabic, it is an indicator that Arabic had become the language of the insider. Such a use baptizes the use of Arabic as an acceptable language of prayer for the Syriac Maronite community. It appropriates it from the invader to thus become the community's language.

Conversely, the modern backing being offered to Syriac by the Church is indicative of its strong return in the near future as a widely spread language, in daily tasks as much as in the liturgy, and even possibly as the native language replacing Arabic for many in Lebanon. The Syriac classes offered by Maronite institutions are paired with similar ones offered elsewhere, particularly Maronite universities across the world (USEK). Their Syriac, Chaldean and Assyrian Catholic and Orthodox counterparts also join this initiative in promoting knowledge of the language (Syriac Orthodox Church in Canada).

However, of all the ways in which the Church may give value to a language, perhaps the most symbolic is that of the Liturgy. Given that at the heart of its mission is the celebration of the Qurbono (Maronite version of the Catholic Mass), the language used for the Qurbono is the language valued by the Church. Maronite parishes across the world often celebrate that liturgy in the official language of each country along with a mix of Classical Arabic and Lebanese (Maronite Diocese of Saint Maron). As such, as the Church begins to replace these last two languages by returning to Syriac, it shifts the identification of its people to the latter (Tur Levnon 2019). It is noteworthy that the most important prayers uttered during the Qurbono, called the prayers of Consecration, had traditionally continued to be spoken in Syriac. Even as Arabic entered the liturgy, Syriac retained its position of honor. This mark of reverence and distinction is reciprocal. The value of Syriac is outlined through the importance of the prayers for which it continues to be preserved. On the other hand, the importance of the prayers of Consecration is also defined through the use of the esteemed and historical language of the Church: Syriac (Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church).

It is anticipated that Syriac liturgies are to be celebrated by priests who can master the language, at least sufficiently to fulfill the requirements of their duties. It is for this reason that

they are taught the language during their seminary formation. This has been continually part of the tradition of the Church. What is new and indicative of an identity renewal, however, is the celebration of liturgies *entirely* in Syriac. Organizations such as Tur Levnon have been encouraging the return of the Maronite liturgy fully in Syriac (Tur Levnon). These modern efforts aim to make it more common, accessible and known. This is being achieved via the use of modern technology such as live streaming or filming. The results are identical to the filming of classes and students speaking Syriac. Those who do not have access to a Syriac liturgy nearby are then able to find one online. Those who are uncertain about such efforts can be encouraged to pursue them as others clearly had.

The videos are highly symbolic given that an otherwise insignificant and limited event may easily become widespread and influential via the Internet. In other words, the filming of liturgies and their promotion online may be presented as a turn in Maronite culture and identity. This perception is supported by additional cultural events such as ethnic festivals, concerts of liturgical and religious chant, as well as televised or streamed celebrations (Tur Levnon).

A counterargument may be made regarding the widespread use of Arabic liturgies to balance the Syriac ones. However, it must be clarified that what this study is discussing is the *new* spread of Syriac and its active promotion and teaching. This is paired with new voices rising to attack Arabic as a foreign language to be rejected. As such, even though Arabic continues to be used in liturgies, the change is noted in the increasing number of parishes who choose to pair it or fully replace it with Syriac classes.

XI-Ruins and Restorations:

Returning Home:

Along with the restorations of the historical language of the Maronite Church come those of its art and culture. In addition to language and its chanted expressions in festivals and liturgies, the community in Lebanon and across the world is both engaging and reviving its historical identifiers. Whether through its presence in certain countries and lands, or through the preservation of ruined possessions, an ongoing preservation of history and memory is being infused with modern life and use. Perhaps the most noticeable and significant growth and change in the Church is the lands in which it is present. Despite the ongoing persecution of Syriac-Maronites, other locations across the world have recently witnessed the preservation, strengthening or even return of the Church's presence. For example in December of 2019, the Maronite Archeparchy of Cyprus published a video of Archbishop Youssef Soueif celebrating the Qurbono in the Church of Saint Anna in Famagusta, presenting it as the first liturgy in 450 years (Maronite Archeparchy of Cyprus). Built in the fourth century, the Church was transferred from the Latin to the Maronite community ten centuries later and then deserted (UNDP). What this liturgy shows is that Maronites are rebuilding ties to their history with attempts to revive certain structures or traditions of it. It is part of a continuing sensitization to one's history. Despite being a minority in an ongoing conflict between Turks and Greeks, the Maronites of Cyprus have maintained their faith, traditions, culture and even a distinct language. They have overcome conflict and multiple emigrations (first from Lebanon then Northern Cyprus) to maintain their identity. In fact, while their unique language of Cypriot Maronite Arabic is endangered, they have succeeded in having it recognized as a Minority Language by the Cypriot government along with ongoing efforts to preserve it (Karyolemou).

Another significant example of Maronite revival and national unity came recently from the visit of Patriarch Rai to accompany Pope Francis on a trip to the Holy Land. Despite the ban of Lebanese citizens from entering the state of Israel due to its ongoing lack of a peace treaty with Lebanon, Maronite clergy maintain an exemption. Still, such a visit was seen as being too political and public for the Patriarch to do, causing various groups in Lebanon to accuse and even threaten him should he fulfill it. However, he still chose to complete his visit, reminding the voices of opposition that he remains the leader and spiritual guide of Maronites across the world, even in states at war. During this visit, the Patriarch spoke to Maronites from the entrance of a church in Kafr Bir'im, previously a Maronite village whose residents had been displaced in 1948 by Israeli soldiers and refused return ever since. He promised to use his ecclesial and political position to achieve pressures from the Vatican for the return of the residents to the town (Reuters 2014). This visit shows that rather than losing association with their Maronite community in Lebanon as the years of the conflict went by, they have restored relations with their Lebanese religious leader for the first time since 1948.

XII-The Spiritual Family:

Rebuilding the Home:

The rebuilding of the ruins of Maronite culture and community continues with the restoration of historical artwork. The renewal of monastic life in Qadisha is combined with efforts to preserve traces of Maronite presence in Lebanon. The documentation and restoration of Maronite art in old churches has been ongoing for some years. Several academic and civil organizations, along with the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities, have launched projects at the start of the 21st century to record or restore such works of art in the old or abandoned deteriorating Maronite churches and monasteries. Frescoes in Kfar Shleiman, Kfar

Hilda, Edde, Maad, Amiun, Rashkida, Kaftun and many other localities in Lebanon have already been restored since 2003. The efforts come after increasing awareness of the importance of preserving one's heritage, as well as the frail state to which this heritage had been previously left. As the Lebanese Group for Speleological Study and Research explains, the Maronite community has "realized the importance of these frescoes that constituted living proof of the artistic and spiritual skills of [their] ancestors" (GERSL 2013).

Remembering the Ancestors:

The importance of such actions is demonstrated to be for the preservation, continuation and spread of the national group. However, in the case of the Maronite community as with many Eastern Churches, the national identity is married to a spiritual one. The drive fueling the preservation of this history and national memory is also of a spiritual nature. The example of the restoration of frescoes outlines the skill and method of painting that is characteristic of the Maronite tradition, but it also preserves the memory of the individuals and events conveyed through these works. This spiritual ancestry is being maintained in modern memory because it holds what may be termed the spiritual DNA of the Maronite Church. Previously mentioned authors such as Saint Ephrem and Saint Isaac the Syriacs are valued beyond their literary skill alone to include their spiritual state and gifts to the Church. They are the ancestors of the Maronite community beyond biological or cultural reasons, because they have formed the way of thinking, praying and living of this community down to modern times.

Discovering the Past to Shape the Future

In other terms, efforts are being instilled into rediscovering and preserving the past in order to remember one's sources, but it also aims to help the community define how to live its own present. Maronites are not only defining themselves by what makes them distinct from

Arabs or Muslims. They are extending that definition into the pro-active shaping of their identity by considering what is positively distinct in them. This can only be defined by the hierarchical and spiritual delineations of the Maronite Church. Given that the Church builds its identity largely on the authority of the deposition of doctrine and laws from previous individuals with an agreed upon authority, then to know what defined it in the past is to know what may and should define it in the present.

To Be Who We Are:

This pro-active defining of the spiritual constituents of the Maronite identity, in particular regarding the faith, also finds its sources outside the community itself. In the early 1960s, the entire Catholic Church convened a council, "Vatican II", to discuss its existence and action in the modern world (Catholic Church 2020). Among the resulting documents was the Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite titled "Orientalium Ecclesiarum" (The Eastern Churches). The decree encouraged the Eastern Catholic Churches, of whom the Maronites are part, to rediscover and live out their spiritual and canonical traditions. "The Churches of the East […] are in duty bound to rule themselves, each in accordance with its own established disciplines, since all these are […] more harmonious with the character of their faithful and more suited to the promotion of the good of souls" (Pope Paul VI). This exhortation is an external invitation and incentive offered to Maronites to undertake many of the efforts and changes mentioned above. It comes as an addition to external persecution and internal identity questions, placing itself as a positive external encouragement for their pride and flourishing in their distinctions.

Patriarchal Power:

The Father:

The Patriarch has throughout history been a symbol of the distinction of that community from other but its internal unity across the spectrum of cultures, states and political beliefs. He had repeatedly shown himself to be a leader of a community that otherwise remained persecuted by political powers. It is difficult to assess whether the role has been a root cause of both the political and religious nationalisms of the Maronite Church or whether it is one of the many fruits of this dual nature of the Eastern Church. The office of Patriarch has over time joined religious and political leadership to different degrees per the need of the time. It has as such been continuously united to the political fate of what is now the state of Lebanon, as previously discussed. These often symbolically expressive roles of leadership of the Patriarchs have come to represent the history of the entire Maronite community, if not of Lebanon. Whether with Patriarch John Maron,[6] Patriarch Gabriel el-Hjouli,[7] Patriarch Estephan el-Douaihy,[8] Patriarch Elias Hoayek[9] or others, the Maronite Patriarchal office has been at the head and center of the Lebanese experience.

The Sons:

This role of political leadership has come under the spotlight repetitively in recent years. The ongoing protests in Lebanon are yet another circumstance in which the Patriarch, or more precisely the Office of the Patriarch, is revealed to be the only constant source of unity for Maronites in Lebanon and across the world. With all the sectarian and secularizing forces

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[6] Though some scholars contest the history of the origins of the Maronites, he remains in the eyes of the Church as the founder of Lebanon as a distinct region with its own army and political leadership.
[7] He was burned alive in Tripoli by the Mamluk forces.
[8] He compiled a general historical narrative termed *Tarikh al*-Azminah.
[9] He helped found modern Lebanon by gaining its independence.

clashing, the Patriarchate remains the sole point of unity for the Lebanese and Diaspora Maronites. As they continue to lose trust in the secular leadership of the community, even with some complaints raised against the current Patriarch, the Office itself remains unchangeable (Maronite Patriarchate). The Maronite faithful do not define it; rather, it defines who can be considered a Maronite. Based on this understanding, and adding the Vatican's declaration on the Eastern Churches previously discussed, one can conclude that the Patriarchate's power is not only constant but also increases when secular representation weakens.

The Spirit of the Nation:

This breaking apart and rejection of the secular representation of Maronites is instrumental despite the disagreement of some Lebanese with the protests (Homsi). As parties and leaders, in place for over thirty years, continue to lose their grip on the Lebanese political scene, that political identity of Maronites is being transformed. Given the close identification between being Maronite and Lebanese, the falling away of these particular political distinctions empowers a unified Maronitism. The strengthening of the general Lebanese identity is indirectly strengthening the Maronite one. As distinctions fall, many observers claim the end of sectarianism in Lebanon (Haugbolle). However, religious identity cannot be transformed via protests, especially in a system such as the Maronite Church in which morality and way of life are not democratically decided. Additionally, despite the secularizing calls of the protests, it has been demonstrated how secularism cannot unify a state. The current support to this movement is brief given that, as all other previous experiments have shown, matters of public social ethics will always arise to divide the population.[10] As such, it is inevitable that Maronites will revert to their Church's spiritual and social identity to define their way of life, leaving the Patriarch and

[10] Please refer to the Canadian and American debates on Euthanasia and Abortion, respectively.

his Bishops as the only valid teaching authority of that Church. This authority is uncontestable religiously given the functioning of the Catholic Church. It is thus that the political authority will be founded yet again on the religious one. In other words, as sectarian political representation wanes, the Patriarchate will remain as the only point of political and spiritual reference for Maronites, especially with a strengthening of Lebanese identity so closely intertwined with Maronite history.

Reconciling the Children:

The Patriarch's true authority and dual leadership is made clearer in the influence he and his Church have on non-Maronites. While warring parties violently fought each other during the civil war, in modern times the Patriarch and his Church have been at the heart of reconciliation.[11] Violent clashes erupted between militants of the Christian and Druze faiths in 1983 in a mixed region of Lebanon called "The Mountain". This conflict caused the death of many and the displacement of even greater numbers as Christian villagers were forced to flee (Rose). Despite a cessation of violence earlier, the supposed resolution of the conflict came in 2001 with the historic visit of Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir to the bastion of Druze leader Jumblatt (Gambill). This visit started a series of Masses of Reconciliation, during which a Maronite Qurbono is offered for peace and the souls of the victims of the conflict, many of whom were killed in their churches (Rose). Continuing with this tradition, the current Patriarch Rai has also visited the region on the anniversary of the Mountain Reconciliation to reaffirm peace and coexistence (The Daily Star). As such, the Office that once led a community that was victim of this violence has no become

[11] Given that such parties do not necessarily represents, in thought or in action, the views of the Maronite Church, it is important to yet again add the nuance that calling them "Maronite" refers to their claim to represent Maronite interests rather than their religious identity or affiliation to the Church.

the instigator of reconciliation, reaffirming the increasingly central role of the Church in the politics of Lebanon and the Middle East.

XIII-Between Two Worlds:

In addition to his role in reconciling warring parties, the Patriarch's visit with Pope Francis to the Holy Land was revealing of the strength of his dual political and spiritual role. His religious position has offered him, as is has offered other Church leaders, access to Maronites living under Israeli authority. His unique spiritual role allows him to be placed in a particularly exceptional situation, granting him political influence that very few others, if any, have in Lebanon. What his ability to enter Israeli-controlled land reveals about the Church he leads is that it is truly transnational in presence and actions. It positions the Church as transcending political conflicts. This is not to be mistaken with the Church being neutral about such conflicts. It is not neutral, but it isn't completely bound by them. Both the Lebanese and Israeli authorities recognize that the Maronite communities living under their political control have a right of access to the fullness of their Church's resources and life.

Chapter Four: The Clash and Cooperation of Civilizations

The current efforts by the Maronite community to define itself as a nation, whether consciously or as channeled by the circumstances of its existence, are the first level of comprehensive analysis of its relations to the Arab-Islamic world. This is because one's identity defines what relations one could and seeks to maintain with others.

The Maronites are growing to be more and more of a transnationally spread community. The previous boundaries of their old identity are being broken down. They are no longer restrained to the Lebanese and surrounding lands. Their children live across all continents and speak and pray with a litany of languages. Their struggle of survival is no longer against military invaders alone but also cultural and religious assimilation. However, this new openness seeks to find stronger points of unity in the midst of all this diversity. This is evident in a renewed struggle by religious and lay leaders of the community to more firmly redefine what Maronite identity is. A population that is so vastly spread now aims to remember that it had a common root and beginning. Such a source is political, religious, linguistic and artistic. As some Maronites relearn their current liturgical language previously spoken daily by their ancestors, others return to discover their homeland in Lebanon on free trips organized by the Church and cooperating organizations. Others use their skills to rediscover, preserve and promote the artistic expressions of their Church and people's history through speleological, archaeological, linguistic, theological and historical studies. The purpose of such efforts is to maintain a timeline of continuity in identity to which all Maronites can relate in order to identify as one family. They also allow them to continue sharing in common expressions of modern identity to maintain a unity of experience. In joining this common past with conscious efforts to create a shared

present, one can confirm that Maronite nationalism stands on a combination of communal characteristics and a consciously constructed identity with precise goals.

With this understanding of modern Maronite self-identification, what can be said regarding its relations to the Arab-Islamic world? This final chapter will focus on the relations of Maronites in Lebanon with their neighbors in the Arab League. The first selection is based on the long-standing role of Lebanon and its Maronites in the history of the nation. Given that the state is closely identified with the nation, it stands at the heart of its experience. Additionally, the Patriarchs of the Maronite Church have repeatedly been main actors in the history of that country, and the Lebanese Patriarchs have been at the center of the changes in the Maronite nation. Finally, Lebanon is part of the Arab League, itself containing states that for the most part identify as Islamic Arab states (Arab League). This renders it at the heart of the encounter between both communities. To this is joined the experience of the diaspora, however, since its experiences continue to influence the approaches of the Maronites and Patriarchate in Lebanon.
As for the Arab-Islamic world, it will be recognized as the states in the Middle East that are members of the Arab League and with close political or social ties to Islam.

I-The Ecumenical Tug of War:

Fleeing from the Past:

Before discussing the possible development of relations between these two communities, the underpinning relational approaches are to be deconstructed. With the ongoing rediscovery of the history of Maronites that focuses largely on its persecution and the recognition of communal crimes against it, the relation to the Arab-Islamic world is naturally one of distrust and bitterness. Fueled by the recent massacres perpetrated by Muslims against fellow Syriacs and Christians in Iraq and Syria, this distrust regenerates due to continuing aggression. The revival of history and

the presentation of its continuity and close connection to present times allows for the creation of a perception of enduring persecution. The Mamluk persecution that killed the mummies in the Assi el-Hadath cave has evolved in the perception of identity builders into the Islamic State's persecution that depopulated the Nineveh of its Syriacs (Piccini). The threats formulated against the Christians of Lebanon by that same group are made more credible to a community still fighting for the recognition of previous genocides by the Islamic Ottomans. All these past and current threats, tensions and attacks continue to shake the trust of Maronites in their neighbors.

Open Arms and Hidden Daggers:

Mutual signs of openness expressed by leaders of both communities, however, balance this mistrust. These demonstrations of the will to dialogue and reconcile have long existed in the region. While actions taken by Maronite leaders had been discussed, those of the Arab-Muslim community also aid in the moderation of a nationalism built on the mythos of persecution alone. Of the more recent efforts, actions and commitments made by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, the Emir of Dubai and other similar religious and political leaders of the Arab-Islamic world show an openness, at least in speech, to the enhancement of inter-communal relations with Christians in general, including Maronites.

The recent visit by the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, to the United Arab Emirates has resulted in a common engagement titled the "Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together". It was signed with Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb and calls for the respect of the freedom of religion. Regarding different forms of extremism, it states:

> "History shows that religious extremism, national extremism and also intolerance have produced in the world, be it in the East or West, what might be referred to as signs of a "third world war being

> fought piecemeal". In several parts of the world and in many tragic circumstances these signs have begun to be painfully apparent, as in those situations where the precise number of victims, widows and orphans is unknown. We see, in addition, other regions preparing to become theatres of new conflicts, with outbreaks of tension and a build-up of arms and ammunition, and all this in a global context overshadowed by uncertainty, disillusionment, fear of the future, and controlled by narrow-minded economic interests" (Vatican).

It reveals the awareness of both parties and their opposition to the dangers of nationalist and religious extremism. Another more concrete commitment resulting from the visit is the building by 2022 of a religious compound in the UAE that will include a synagogue, mosque and church. The purpose is to show the ability of the three Abrahamic faiths to coexist despite ongoing conflicts in the Middle East between their adherents (Deutsche Welle).

However, these verbal offerings of peace are not always reflected in action. The UAE joint document remains very vague and inconclusive. It does not include tangible, clear and assessable goals. As such, it remains more of an image of coexistence than a strong indicator of the willingness to reform towards that purpose. For example, despite the constant calls and promises by Egyptian and Iraqi religious officials such as Sheikh el-Tayeb to defend their Christian communities, the latter remain highly persecuted. Violence against these groups remains rampant. Egypt continues to be the victim of suicide bombers in its cities and Islamist raids in the Sinai and peripheral regions (BBC 2018). The ISIS phenomenon saw the Iraqi army disintegrate in the face of armed adversity, with Sunni and Shiite militias continuing their battles periodically (Fraiman, Long and Talmadge).

What remains more alarming in these regions is the fact that Islamic law continues to support such actions. For example, though the UAE document called for the freedom of religion, Muhammad on the other hand calls for the killing of apostates. This is found in the Hadiths of Sahih el-Bukhari stating "whosoever changes his religion, kill him" (The Book of Fighting). The hadiths are sayings of Mohammed that are taken by the vast majority of Muslims to be authoritative (Sahih al-Bukhari). In order to correctly and fully grasp religious verses in modern times, a look at the interpretation and context will be taken into account. Regarding Sheikh al-Tayib, in a 2016 Ramadan interview on Egyptian television, he reaffirmed that the punishment for Apostasy is death when it turns the apostate against the community. Examples include fighting Islam, but given his lack of specification of details, this may be taken to mean any particular activity that may be seen as a threat to the Muslim community, including preaching other faiths (CBC-Egypt). His role as Grand Imam and previous President of a university as renowned in the Arab-Islamic world as Al-Azhar renders statements such as the one he made regarding Apostasy very dangerous (The Muslim 500). Additionally, his declaration is indeed not only indicative of popular acceptance but also formative of the population's stance given his current and previous religious and academic positions. Other states continue to persecute Christians and converts to Christianity, either with apostasy laws such as in Saudi Arabia (Human Rights Watch) and Sudan (Salih) or with systemic aggression and inequality such as the stringent laws on the building of church in Egypt, not applied to mosques. All these forms of open, violent or hidden systemic persecution against Christians sponsored by states and Islamic institutions in the Middle East render relations mistrustful and dangerous.

Towards a Transitional Justice:

Despite ongoing challenges and deaths, call for dialogue has resulted in the search for Transitional Justice. "Transitional Justice refers to the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large-scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response. [It is also] rooted in accountability and redress for victims" (ICTJ 2020). The large-scale nature of these violations refers to the conflicts that emerge between entire nations. The history of the Maronites is filled with such examples, both previous and modern. The mummies of Qadisha are themselves silent testimonies to the persecution and unjust conditions in which this community has had to live many times in the past due to its faith or political position. As such, Transitional Justice is not only beneficial to large-scale modern conflicts.

What renders it even more significant is its ability to transform historical memory. Historical memory refers to two different situations in this analysis. The first is the memory of past injustices that have come to an end and no longer require or can be provided with justice. The death of the persecuted individuals that later mummified is one example. This is due to several reasons. They do not have immediate and known descendants that have been affected by the displacement and loss of possessions of these individuals. Unlike the Druze massacres of the Mountain, no known displaced descendant is seeking to return to his village or his house. Additionally, the persecutors themselves are no longer alive, nor are the empires, kingdoms or states still in existence to provide restitution (ICTJ 2020). In this kind of historical situation, the memory refers to an event that does not require any modern resolution among parties. While the hurt may be enduring, the conflict itself has come to its end.

The second form of historical memory addressed by Transitional Justice is one in which the conflict has not concluded. Ongoing persecutions have allowed Maronites to remember past aggressions not as historical events but ongoing injustice. In searching for recognition of events like the Kafno as genocide, Maronites seek a resolution to an open wound. In other terms, forms of Transitional Justice such as the recognition of mass atrocities would allow Maronites to take a step towards ceasing to view themselves continually as victims of the Arab or Islamic world (ICTJ 2020). Transitional justice is also imperative for the creation of boundaries in time between ancestral and current members of a nation. As such, to recognize the Kafno as genocide, for example, cannot remove its injustice from the lives of its direct victims who are no longer alive. It can rather transform the event in the eyes of modern Maronites from being an ongoing injustice by the Turkish state into a past one that can be amended through some form of reparation. For example, the recognition of the

Additionally, Transitional Justice permits the fostering of open dialogue and conflict mitigation methods. The steps taken by the previous Maronite Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Sfeir towards reconciliation with Jumblat have allowed for the open admission of injustices and crimes undertaken between the Druze and Maronite communities. In addition to the healing of wounds, it now creates a safe political and religious situation in which victims of displacement may publicly request the right of return to their villages. Such measures are imperative in the steps of reconciliation between Maronites and surrounding Muslim groups such as the Druze.

Another approach, indicative of the interconnectedness of national identity and peace building, is the Holy Qurbono commemorating victims of inter-communal conflict and subsequent reconciliation. This Maronite expression of the Catholic Mass has a role that is paradoxical but not contradictory (Maronite Diocese of Saint Maron). It is an expression of

religious belief in which full participation is restricted to Christians, given that the reception of Communion in the second part of the Qurbono is restricted to those who fulfill specific conditions (Catholic Church 2020). However, in the case the reconciliation, the Qurbono has also been used various times to commemorate, honor and uphold peace with Muslim communities, as seen in the efforts after the massacres of the Mountain. This example shows how such a central characteristic of identity, even a definer of exclusivity and difference, can be transformed in the purpose of building peace.

The Qurbono itself is not transformed. However, it is its use and purpose that allows its symbolism to change. What was and remains a marker of identity and delineator of group boundaries is now also used to render that identity open to embrace those with which it had been in conflict. In fact, in the regions of the Mountain Massacres, the Maronite Qurbono now becomes a characteristic and a ritual of reconciliation. It may be included into the category of Transnational Justice for its role in transforming Maronite churches from sites of violence and massacre into sites of healing. The large-scale conflict that occurred between the Druzes and the Maronites can thus be concluded, or at least begin to be concluded, by the opening of one's identity to a transformation. It is not a transformation that erases such identities or attacks what is just in them. Rather, it is one that allows them to be shared as they are. As such, the churches of Deir el-Qamar that previously witnessed the killing of Maronites now become a place of peaceful encounter with the Druzes.

Openness Before Closure:

As Maronites continue sharing in symbolic expressions of reconciliation with their neighbors, the discussion of old wounds becomes more open. Just as the commemoration of the Massacres of the Mountain allows for the discussion of future justice for the victims, so does the

admission of other previous hurts allow for the establishment of new channels of communication between communities. One such testimony comes through the form of cinematic representation. In the movie "The Insult", the wounds inflicted mutually by Lebanese Maronites and Palestinian Muslims in the massacres of Damour and Shatila are openly discussed. The story examines a conflict between a Maronite and Palestinian man that degenerates into a communal situation. Both men address the massacres committed by members of their respective communities those of the other. The movie creates a neutral environment, on screen, in which the historical grievances between both communities can be addressed without the flaring of tensions. The director offers a new form of Transitional Justice based on the invention of new arenas of encounter. The movie allows for complete control over the development of the story without external societal interference, thus reaching a final conclusion in which both individuals become reconciled. The key feature of the movie is that it does not lay full blame on either community, given that it discusses crimes committed by both of their members. Indeed, actual photographs and videos of the Damour massacre are displayed during the court sessions in the movie, allowing for their discussion within a contained environment. As such, the final reconciliation between the Arab Muslim Palestinian and the Maronite Lebanese becomes itself representative of the greater reconciliation of the two communities. Above all, it becomes a means through which these two communities can reach a sense of resolution without the necessity to actually encounter each other (Klawans).

An important note outlined by Klawans in his analysis of the movie was the circumstances of the two lawyers representing the opposing sides. They are father and daughter. The former represents the Maronite and the latter the Palestinian. It is a metaphorical reflection of the development of conflict brought about by time and the change of political circumstances.

The older generation of Maronites never resolved the conflict. For them it is enduring. However, the new generation does not share the same experiences. The younger lawyer is emblematic of Allan's discussions on generational memory and the changes in national identity. It shows a different understanding of relations to the other for those who had not experienced the main events of a conflict (270).

However, the movie remains too optimistic in presenting the younger generation as completely cut off from the older one's experience. As such, the absence of reference to any form of national hurt or memory shows a lack of precision in the presentation of such conflicts. It may be true that some members of society completely reject their community's national identity, but they are not representative of the entire generation.

Such a movie reveals several issues regarding the modern relations of Maronites to Arab-Islamic communities. Firstly, there are new means through which such relations can be developed and resolved in security and away from the risk of renewed violence. Indeed, it is a new and creative form of Transitional Justice given that it allows for the discussion and resolution of conflicts. These conflicts are indeed too difficult and widespread to be addressed by traditional means such as a court of law. The wounds of the Lebanese civil war of the 1970's were not resolved. Instead, a cessation of violence was simply put in place. It is why such tensions continue to exist between communities. Modern means such as moviemaking, especially The Insult movie, rely on the representation of such communities via on-screen characters in order to discuss sensitive topics publicly. The intimate connection created by the community with the characters allows for the continuation of this intimacy in the catharsis. The denouement of conflict reached becomes symbolic of the communities themselves. For example, the airing of the scenes of violence from the Damour Massacre in the movie allows for an open

admission of the events between both communities. In that sense, the screen becomes the replacement of the International Court: a contained environment in which victims can receive public acknowledgement of their suffering. In the case of The Insult movie, the screen was truly transformed into a court of law. In other words, as Maronites await a formal and international political and legal recognition of the Damour massacres, they have received it for the time being in some form via cinematic screens.

New forms of justice such as these allow for the resolution of conflict residue. Ramirez, Morrison and Kendall discuss that psychological residue of conflict and its effect on victim communities (Kendal, Morrison and Ramirez 7). Their work reflects an important distinction between conflict cessation and resolution. The first refers to the halt in violence, while the latter is a true solution of tensions, wounds and pending issues (Kendal, Morrison and Ramirez 9). It is these forms of residue that are ignored in the younger lawyer presented in The Insult. As such, modern means of social communication and encounter like filmmaking allow for communities such as the Maronite one to finally move closer towards a resolution of its historic grievances with its Arab-Islamic neighbors. In addressing these historical hurts openly, the Maronites can overcome the conflict residue discussed above and allow conflicts in which violence had ended to also come to an end. The lack of such resolutions provide fuel to reignite conflicts which had never ended, thus having been allowed to turn into a extended one without the intention to do so. Cooperation can begin to return as a form of relationship building. In the view of that community, the Arab and the Muslim can then change from being perceived as a historical persecutor to being the co-citizen, the cooperator and the friend.

Renationalization:

The Maronite pursuit of justice and recognition, historical and modern, indicates a continuing formulation of a defined identity. While many experts on nationalism such as Andreas Wimmer draw an intimate link between nation-states, ethnic politics and wars, the distinction between cause and result of war must be further elucidated (Wimmer 114, 2013). The refusal to recognize real or perceived distinctions is indeed itself a cause of conflicts deemed nationalistic in nature, since identity-based variances can in some ways encourage tension. However, pre-existing political differences can also help intensify identity divergence. The case of the Syriac-Maronite identity is a strong example of this nuance. On one hand, the argument may be made that the choice of Maronite community leaders to focus on characteristics separating them from other communities may be indicative of a pre-existing desire to separate oneself from the other rather than a real or significant distinction. For example, many argue that the choice of language of communication and culture in Lebanon is merely a reflection of racism or sectarianism and the desire to distance oneself from others (Marcus). However, it is historically imprecise to omit the fact that Syriac has been organically maintained in Lebanon in large part due to the pre-existing distinct religious and cultural practices within the Maronite community. In other terms, even if the Arab or Syriac linguistic identities are willed and constructed separations, they remain founded in organically pre-existing ones. As such, to deny their presence and value to their respective communities is to deny them self-determination and identification. This knowledge is conducive to healthy relations between both communities, in which neither feels transgressed against or denied its pursuit of its own identity.

An example of the blame of the pursuit of national goals on the desire to be separate rather than vice versa can be seen in the work of Elaine Hagopian who argues that Maronite

nationalism did not exist till around the seventeenth century (108). In her study, she draws similarities between Maronitism and Zionism (107). Even though she admits the differences between them both by calling Israel a colonial state and the Maronites indigenous to Lebanon, she compares their goals without further discernment. She continues to draw similarities between both movements via broad historical claims about the beginnings of the Maronite nation (108). The claim regarding the late development of Maronitism in the seventeenth century ignores various scholars who discuss the joining of the community in a proto state as early as with John Maron. Additionally, for such an argument to be upheld, nationalism would have to be defined with a strict definition that excludes the role of faith communities, leadership and structure in building a national effort and self-understanding.

Another example of broad definitions is found in her second claim that Maronites had been detached from the Latin Church till the time of the Crusades (108). Previously quoted letters and historical events indicate that Maronites had recognition and close ties to both Rome and Constantinople as early as the days of their founder Maron himself. As such, yet again the definition of religious unity is restricted to a very narrow historical but also analytical approach.

Additionally, her analysis looks over the reasons in which national sentiment moves from the state of an assumed presence to that of an externally expressed one. She confuses the lack of structural expressions of national identity with the lack of one. Robson provides a concise yet complete refutation of Hagopian's limited historical analysis. In her article titled "Recent Perspectives on Christianity in the Modern Arab World", she discusses a relatively new interest in the Christians of the Arab world. She presents the reason for this new inquiry as being a rise in political Islam in the 1970s, as well as the "Islamization" of the political discourse. Robson continues to present the repercussions of this novelty on Christians in the region. She states the

two-fold impact. Firstly, religious minorities became more persecuted and discriminated against. Secondly, the politicization of Islam encouraged the counter-measure of the politicization of Christianity. This refers to the approach to one's faith and religious institutions as valid political options and actors (Robson 315).

These same arguments can be translated into the two pillars of this study. Maronitism has arisen as a reactionary movement to the existential threat and sidelining caused by the Islamic State and previous waves of persecution in the Levant. The community's new discovery and questioning regarding its own identity, added to the current political upheavals in Lebanon, will push it to seek support in its historical practices. The religious leader is once again becoming the sole authoritative political representative of the community. As Robson puts it, Christianity in the Middle East is being politicized by many of its adherents. In assessing Hagopian's work through this line of analysis, it can be affirmed that her claim regarding the absence of Maronite nationalism till the seventeenth century is indeed false. What the historical timeline drawn by this study reveals is that Maronites were forced to engage with the governments of their time as one community. It happened in the 1970s with secular Pan-Arabism, and it is happening again with the violent Islamic fundamentalism of ISIS (315). Robson's analysis provides the lacking nuance to Hagopian's. Maronite national identity did exist long before the seventeenth century. What was new to that century, however, was yet another interval of politicization. However, one issue to mark in Robson's analysis would be the naming of Middle Eastern Christians as "Arab Christians" (315). The continuation of such a terminology that encompasses the Copts, Syriacs, actual Arabs and others allows for the erasure of the distinct and diverse expressions of Christianity which have existed before Islam and still endure to this day via different eastern

Churches. It also holds back the efforts of these communities in fighting against their ongoing religious and ethnic assimilation.

Finally, the argument Hagopian provides to counter the claim of an early nationalism is itself sufficient to disprove such affirmations. She states that "family, village and church were the main group contexts of Maronites; there was no overall structure linking villages into a concept of nationhood or community until well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (108). In fact, the hierarchy of the Maronite Church is in itself a structure linking Maronites. Indeed, the village priest owes his authority to the bishop who receives it from the patriarch (Catholic Church 2003). As such, the Church itself provides the structures for a concept of community that transcends village, city and province.

These nuances outline the importance of discerning between what constitutes underlying organic foundations of nationalism and what constitutes false claims about their existence.

Hagopian's error, summarized, is to define nationalism through a strict lens. However, as developed throughout this study, Maronite nationalism has multiple facets. It is a shared history, true or perceived, that forms a sense of communal experience. It is also a willed act of nation building by spiritual and political leaders mentioned throughout the study. It can additionally be rooted solely in the common spiritual hierarchy and culture that separates the Maronite Church from other Christian communities. As such, Maronite nationalism is all of these approaches combined to convey, foster, or build upon a shared identity.

The historical argument developed by Hagopian is equally reflected in modern times through the globalocal face of the Maronite Church. The Maronite village has now become a country, and the distance between individuals has grown. However, the Internet has bridged these distances and allowed for the creation of an online community. The defining aspects of the

Maronite identity, whether political, spiritual, or social, remain the same. Additionally, the Internet now allows for local and different identities such as Australian Maronitism and Lebanese Maronitism to be joined once again, truly reinforcing the globalocal identity. In other words, just as the experiences of different villagers would have been separate but joined by a common bishop and patriarch, so is the experience of Maronites across the world different but joined by faith, spiritual figures, online contact, awareness of events, and other factors. In that sense, the identity of Maronites cannot be defined either, nor is it important to defend the main point of this study. Depending on what form of identity one analyses, results may be different. What remains significant is what Hagopian overlooks: Maronite identity is not restricted to one form, but it has numerous branches of various reach that intertwine. In fact, a globalocal Church cannot but have a diversity of identities with a shared core. What remains pertinent to the study is the awareness or perception of the existence of such a shared identity, one that is discussed throughout the sections. It is the political identity of the Lebanese, the spiritual identity of Saint Maron, the social identity of the hard-working and praying individual, all intertwined with various distinctive cultural and political identities.

Breaking and Joining:

To maintain awareness of this nuance between cause and result is to allow the Maronite pursuit of a national identity to be approached with respect to the community's equal right to exist. The Pan-Arab goal had been at the expense of the identity of non-Arabs and non-Muslims. The Islamic State brought additional cultural erasure to the Syriacs, thus echoing the accusations repetitively made in the Arab world that those who do not adhere to Arab culture are enemies of Islam. These accusations allow for the statues of Assyria to be destroyed by an Iconoclastic Islam and Arabic replaces Syriac in the name of Islam (Curry). Constantly, both culture and

religion become heavily intertwined. The Ottoman Empire mixed both approaches: it permitted on one hand the minorities' self-rule in the Millet System within an Islamic Caliphate. On the other hand, Assyrian and Maronite Christians were killed, enslaved and displaced.

In all these cases, politics and religion intertwined to promote support, instigate uprisings and accuse the other. Before the rise of Islam, many Arab tribes were Christian. However, the Arab invasions from the similarly named Peninsula brought Islam to the rest of the cultural communities (Jalilov, Kolesniko and Litvinsky 468). Additionally, Islam identifies heavily with Arab culture. Muslims believe that the Qur'an had been dictated to Mohammed in Arabic, and the language continues to be taught to Muslims (The Quran Academy Canada). It reflects as such the status of Syriac in the Maronite *Qurbono*. Additionally, most states belonging to the Arab League have Islam as the official state religion (Arab League). This makes the League a group of Islamic states identifying their laws, language and culture with their faith. As such, as Maronites continue to distinguish themselves from that community in culture and ethnicity, continuing accusations may be raised regarding their attack on Islam. However, signs of goodwill and mutual respect that acknowledge the right to be different while respectful continue to be displayed and encouraged, as seen through the historic meeting in the UAE.

II-An Eye Into the Future:

Away From Death Towards a New Identity:

The multitude of these efforts and reactions in the Middle East begin to build the future relationships between both communities. The Maronite approach to the Arab-Islamic world will be the sole one analyzed here in order to remain restricted to the purpose of this study and avoid assimilating the positions of other non-Arab or non-Muslim groups into the Arab-Islamic approach. First of all, as efforts to rediscover the history, art and theological expressions of

Syriac-Maronites continues via those of the Lebanese state, the Patriarchate or private endeavors, the available discoveries from which to shape an identity also grow. Without such efforts there can be no material on which to build the history of a nation. Additionally, historical grievances continue to be renewed and added to with the recent upheavals in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Syria where Syriacs are largely present and where the founder of Maronites lived. With the spread of mediums like the Internet that allow for an international awareness of regional events, the Maronite world was able to receive instant and continuous broadcasting of the persecution of those similar to them. As such, the physical threat that was of a limited nature now becomes near to every Maronite made witness of the persecution of their coreligionists.

The dichotomy created by the Islamic State between Muslim and Christian has encouraged a sense of Otherness among Maronites. Fellow citizens had turned into aggressors in the Syrian war and rendered citizenship as a void definer of unity. Instead, Syriacs and Maronites now sought other identifiers that would mark a separation from their persecutors. In other words, as they continue to discover their historical identifiers, they use them to justify a proposed innate ethnic and cultural distinction that explains the recent aggression they experienced. If the Islamic State was killing Christians, destroying their culture and replacing their language, then perhaps they were indeed irreconcilable. This is where the otherness of faith defines the otherness of culture. As such, Maronites will continue to redefine themselves away from the Arab or Muslim world in the near future, as long as the trauma and residual conflict are not healed between the communities. To clarify, as the Maronites push on with identity building, mutual signs of reconciliation will allow for the freedom to do so, while residual memory and trauma will continue to provide incentive for this separate identification among the Maronites.

Meeting as Equals:

Lebanon remains at the heart of this identity lies and continues to strongly shape the Maronite nation because of its historical and current centrality to its existence. This makes it a central actor in setting the tone of encounter with the Arab-Islamic world. The various steps of reconciliation undertaken with Lebanese communities and across the Middle East create greater potential for encounter. When Maronites define themselves as an ethnically, culturally and religiously separate community, peaceful acts of acceptance and openness create a sense of equality in encounter. As such, visits between leaders such as the Patriarch and Jumblat allow for a rapprochement between communities. As the world becomes more aware of the internal affairs of states, particularly minorities, these given states in turn become more and more accountable for their actions. For this reason, the persecution of Maronites by states cannot continue unchecked or unknown, creating even more pressure for the respect of the rights of that community. The conflict in Syria for example shows the role of the international community in monitoring persecutions and placing restrictions on states that otherwise would go unchecked. This includes registering human rights violations and placing sanctions (United Nations Secretary General). Additionally, institutions like the International Criminal Court that prosecutes "genocide and crimes against humanity" create some accountability for powerful political regimes, thus placing additional pressure against those that seek to violate the rights of minorities like the Maronites in the Middle East (International Criminal Court). This shows that relations between the Syro-Maronite and the Arab-Islamic communities will continue to grow in positive interaction, at least in the near future. Additionally, the presence of the diaspora allows for the infusion of concepts such as freedom of religion and mutual respect into both communities and their leadership. Such concepts were not necessarily previously present or

ingrained in the Middle East. The diaspora's influence further encourages mutual cooperation in the Middle East.

Choice at All Costs:

All of these improvements in relations do not negate the pattern of persecution and violence encountered by the Maronite community because of their faith and political stances. The violence against their identity continues to plague them, but they now seek to overcome it via a look to the past and the future. The National Pact and Taif Agreement placed the identity of an Arab-Islamic world on a people who sought to be distinguished from either. The heavy military and political involvement of surrounding Arab or Islamic states such as Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia continues to present an opposite pull. However, whenever the choice was left to them fully, Maronites chose independence: with the resistance to the Byzantines, the Millet system of the Ottomans, the establishment of the Lebanese state by the Patriarch and continued renewal of commitment to one's independent identity. These past persecutions, along with those that threaten them in the near future, have not been able to restrain the national hopes of the Maronites. They continue to use modern technology and creativity to rediscover and disseminate their culture and establish national bonds across borders.

This transforms the Maronite nation into a more distinctly and clearly defined one through the encouragement of identifiers such as Syriac and art. It also alters these characterizations into points of unity between Maronites dispersed across the world to allow their identity to become transnational. Defining Lebanon, for example, as the historical homeland of Maronites, does not intend to exclude those of the nation who do not live there. Rather, through tracing back one's ancestry, citizenship, culture and religious sense of belonging, Maronites

across the world are able to share countries that otherwise would divide them by transforming them into national homelands.

As the Lebanese community continues to distinguish itself from others, it will encounter resistance. Fellow citizens will raise accusations of racism or religious xenophobia just as was the case with Shubashy's Egypt. Additionally, accusations of lack of loyalty to the Arab World or Lebanon may also in all probability be made. The closeness of the Maronite Church with Rome by faith allows for suspicion and charge of foreign loyalties to be raised. Just as with the case of the Patriarch and Israel, the religious duties and existence of Maronites are also frequently intertwined with or misjudged as having hidden political motives (Reuters 2014). As such, as they continue to assert their distinct identity, chasms might grow with the communities they seek to distinguish themselves from. It is for these reasons that conflict, both violent or not, will reoccur between those communities.

However, these negative anticipations can be diluted by the direction of identity awareness in the Arab World. While some states like the UAE develop more openness to religious freedom, others face the rise of identity movements such as the Amazighs and the Assyrians. Efforts at reconciliation between communities in Lebanon also indicate a more cooperative future between them. The open discussion of previous injustices and attempts to reach Transitional Justice remain strongly encouraged. As such, while some currents in the Arab-Islamic world will continue to threaten the Maronite nation and identity, others provide protection and support to its members in an attempt to achieve lasting coexistence.

III-The Circle of Life and Death:

The final extrapolation regarding these relations is regarding the cyclical nature of nationalism and relations in the Middle East. Historical cases, most prominently in Lebanon and

Europe, show that the freedom to define one's identity shifts based on the openness and tolerance of the political powers (Kaldor). The long periods of prosperity and coexistence experienced by the Maronites with other communities are not ignored when building such an analysis. Indeed, relations have not been continuous in their status, and this has depended in many situations on the disposition of the rulers. Of these can be remembered the Druze Emir Fakhreddine the Second who had Maronite Patriarch Yuhanna Makhluf as one of his advisors (McCallum 353). Such leaders show that relations between the Arab-Islamic world and the Maronites have differed throughout history due to many factors, being very amicable at times.

All in all, both communities continue to reconcile in some ways and clash in others. What is novel to the relationship is a renewed Maronite self-identification as a separate nation seeking recognition in a largely Arab-Islamic world. With other communities seeking similar nationalistic goals, the future of the Arab World may be determined to be one of upheavals based on identity. These upheavals could lead to the pursuit of national self-rule and the disintegration of the Arab League. This is similar to the case of Great Britain and the Brexit movement away from the engulfing policies of the European Union and the turn towards national self-determination (BBC 2020). As such, this raises the final point of the study to be addressed.

IV-Sectarian Secularism:

What fuels this search for identity beneath all the various reasons portrayed above? At the core of the identity of both the Maronites and the Arab-Islamic world is their respective religion. Their art, language, customs and even political stances are heavily influenced by faith. The Maronite push against being part of the Arab world, opposed by the Muslims' push against Europe, is a strongly religious stance. Europe is still seen as a Christian continent by many Muslims (Robson 312). On the other hand, Maronites refuse to assimilate into a Middle East that

is considered Islamic in nature. It is possible to defend the proposition that religious tensions hide national ones. However, these national identities and goals are themselves a cover of religious identity. Political gains and maneuvers can sometimes alter religious alliances. On the other hand, these political gains are themselves shaped by the ambitions of states, groups and communities, which in turn are fashioned by religion. This may not necessarily be true of other regions of the world. However, in the Middle East generally and in shaping Syriac-Maronite and Arab-Islamic relations in particular, religion forms that identity. This is what Ernest Renan hinted at when he stated that "a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" (Renan).

Even ethnicity, the second half of this encounter of identities, is influenced by religion. As Dr. Zalloua recently explained in an interview on Lebanese television, the genetic variation he discussed is only found with Maronites. He states that the seclusion of the Maronites in the mountains of Lebanon throughout the centuries has allowed for them to preserve, up until recently, this genetic uniqueness in the region. As Maronites continue to spread around the world, intermarriage will gradually diversify the genetic makeup of the community. However, for the time being, they can continue to claim a genetic distinction as a nation (Maronite Cultural Center). Additionally, the Maronite identity is what distinguishes this community from other Syriacs.

As such, faith continues to be central to the separation of Syriac-Maronites in Lebanon from other communities in the Arab League. All other distinctions have maintained their symbolic national worth or are being reendowed with it due to their link to the Maronite faith. Syriac was preserved alive in the *Qurbono*. Maronite architecture is unique. The technical terms used nowadays in the Lebanese dialect find their roots in Syriac. They have specific meanings referring to their role. As such, even in architecture, to understand the history of the development

of houses in Lebanon and their design, the influence of Syro-Maronite culture is yet again valuable (Iskandar 187, 2001). Motifs and artistic expressions find their source in religious symbolism. Through all these facts, and as demonstrated throughout the study, the Syriac-Maronite endeavor to nation building is a manifestation of Sectarian Secularism. It is the expression of religious belief portrayed through the outlining of seemingly ethnic, political and cultural distinctions. When it has been used as a term, it has referred to laicizing intentions and efforts, rather than the opposite meaning being applied here (Bauer). What this study argues for is that Maronitism, as a representative case of nationalism and national identity, is at its core a search for an objective identity that is exterior but also deeply intimate to the individual. In other words, sectarian secularism argues that there is an identifiable reason behind the marriage of religious and ethnic belonging and the fruit of nationalism it begets. Syro-Maronitism and Arab-Islamism are both cultural and ethnic expressions of faith. It is this argument that the previous Pope Benedict XVI made regarding European identity in 2007. Predicting the disintegration of the European Union, he stated the following:

> "The process of European unification is clearly not shared by everyone […because] various 'chapters' of the European project were 'written' without taking adequate account of the wishes of citizens. What emerges from all this is that it is unthinkable to create an authentic 'common European home' while ignoring the identity of the people of our continent. An identity that is historical, cultural and moral, more even than geographical, economic or political; an identity made up of a collection of universal values which Christianity contributed to creating, thus acquiring a role that is not only historical but foundational for the

> continent of Europe. If, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the governments of the EU wish to 'get closer' to their citizens, how can they exclude such an essential element of European identity as Christianity, in which a vast majority of that people continue to identify themselves? Is it not surprising that modern Europe, while seeking to present itself as a community of values, seems ever more frequently to question the very existence of universal and absolute values? And does this singular form of 'apostasy' - from oneself even more than from God - not perhaps induce Europe to doubt its own identity" (Catholic News Agency).

In discussing the identity of the people of Europe, Pope Benedict addresses the historical, cultural and moral identity. The sectarian aspects of an identity are presented as being at its foundation, even superseding the political and social ones. This presentation reflects what has been put forward throughout this study. What forms a nation is at the root religion. It provides the myths and stories of creation. It also provides the ethos of a nation in which morality forms its laws, its unifying aspects and its purpose. Finally, it delineates what distinguishes communities beyond compromise. For example, Maronites do not separate themselves from Iraqi Syriac. They belong to the same nation. However, they are distinguished from their fellow Lebanese, Arab or Syriac, by faith. What allows the Maronite to identify to the Iraqi Syriac but not the Lebanese Druze is what is uncompromising between them both: the perceived objective morality of religion.

The same can be argued for the Arab-Islamic world. What unites it is not an Arab ethnicity. Indeed, as previously discussed, the term *Arab* includes various faiths, cultures and

ethnicities falsely termed as "Arab". What unites these multiple states is a belief in Islam. In fact, as Maronite identity builders had argued, this Islamic faith has abetted in the trampling of the diverse cultures and faiths present in the Middle East. It is also the core issue at the heart of the Lebanese identity debate in the past two centuries. Lebanon was given "an Arab face" because the Christians refused to be identified to the rest of the Islamic world. This is yet another case drawing a close link between faith and identity. As such, the question of Syro-Maronite nationalism, similarly to the Arab-Islamic one, is truly a case of secular sectarianism. Perhaps in looking at the Patriarchal crest, the link between faith and nation is clearly embodied. It boldly states of the Patriarch, after all, that: "The glory of Lebanon is given to him" (Maronite Patriarchate).

Conclusion:

This study has built a broad image of Maronitism today. It built on an analysis of the historical chronology, particularly basing itself on important events that shape the national memory of the Maronite community. This inquiry has yielded an understanding of modern Maronite nationalism as one that keeps alive the memory of historical grievances as definer of national ethos. Additionally, such injustices help sustain a perception of otherness within a community that views itself as ethnically and religiously distinct from the majority of the Middle East. In fact, it is the recent uprising of the Islamic State that has fueled such a search for identity in a community that was attacked and threatened.

The modern identity shaped in this study reflects historical aspects of the Maronite Church such as religious art, theological expressions distinct from the rest of the Catholic communion, the revival of Syriac as a spoken language and the attribution of a Syriac, rather than Arab, ethnicity to the community.

With such divergences in identity being promoted within the community in Lebanon and the diaspora, the effects on its relations to the Arab-Islamic world had to be investigated in order to set a clear prediction of the future of the group and other similar minorities in the Middle East. The result is a balance of continuing antagonism or unsustained dialogue with some communities and state and more pronounced expressions of cooperation from others. On the short historical term, such a balance shows promising potential for coexistence and the respect of the right of self-determination of minorities. This is encouraged by an increasing national awareness across the region of various ethnic, political and religious groups such as the Assyrians and the Amazighs. However, the long-term prospects of Maronitism are like any other national group to be studied. Their relations to their neighbors vary with varying conditions such as political atmosphere, characters in power and tendency to use violence. The Maronites will grow and wane in cycles as they have done throughout their history.

As such, this study concludes that the search for a unique national identity will incentivize Maronites to address historical hurts while maintaining beneficial relations to their neighbors and striving to gain their rights from those who are less open to coexistence. However, though their efforts show hints of state building, it is perhaps too optimistic to say that they will indeed conclude in one. Rather, as the tide of nationalism rises across the world, so will it once again recede in the future.

What remains is the knowledge that minority groups across the Middle East continue to fight for the right of self-determination. The possible long-term result will be the deconstruction of the Arab League as a political alliance of Arab-Islamic or the creation of new ethno-religious politically autonomous regions such as provinces or even new states.

Annex I

Sequence of Events in Maronite History and Collective Memory as Encountered in the Study

- *4th Century* – Unknown Christian community establishes Saint Anthony Qozhaya monastery in Qadisha Valley.
- *4th Century* (*375 A.D.)* – Our Lady of Qannoubine Monastery is founded by Emperor Theodosius.
- *5th Century* – Saint Maron establishes himself as a hermit in modern-day Syria, and communities of pagans are converted by his example.
- *6th Century (around 517 A.D.)* – 350 Maronites are massacred due to their faith.
- *6th Century* – Bishop John Maron becomes first Patriarch of the Maronite Church and establishes a self-ruling Maronite community in modern-day Lebanon. His nephew vanquishes the pursuing Byzantine army.
- *7th Century* – Mohammad starts preaching Islam, and Islamic Invasions begin.
- *13th Century* – Mamluk forces invade Lebanon, attack Maronites and burn Patriarch Gabriel Hjouly.
- *18th Century* – Patriarch Douaihy produces several works on history. He dies in Qannoubine Monastery in Qadisha Valley.
- *20th Century – (1914-1918 A.D.)* The Ottomans, who had been in Lebanon for centuries, abet in the causing of the man-made famine in Mount Lebanon known as Kafno after having previously encouraged the Druzes to massacre the Maronites.
- *20th Century – (1919 A.D.)* Patriarch Hoayek heads a mission to Paris to demand, and gain, the independence of Lebanon.

- *20th Century – (1943 A.D.)* Lebanese political leaders sign the National Pact dividing rule amongst the three main sects of the state.
- *20th Century – (1975 A.D.)* Lebanese Civil War breaks out.
- *21st Century – (2001 A.D.)* Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir promotes the Reconciliation of the Mountain with the Druzes of Lebanon.
- *21st Century* – The Islamic State attacks multiple Middle Eastern states and massacres Syriacs in Iraq and Syria while threatening the Maronites of Lebanon.
- *21st Century – (2020 A.D.)* Anti-sectarian protests erupt in Lebanon, rejecting the rule of all existing political parties.

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